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THE

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IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOLUME VIII.

CONTAINING

A CONTINUATION OF SERMONS ON VARIOUS AND IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

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SERMONS

ON VARIOUS

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

SERMON XVI.*

The Importance and Advantage of a thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth.

HEBREWS v. 12.

FOR WHEN, FOR THE TIME, YE OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS, YE HAVE NEED THAT ONE TEACH YOU AGAIN WHICH BE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD; AND ARE BECOME SUCH AS HAVE NEED OF MILK, AND NOT OF STRONG MEAT.

THESE words are a complaint, which the apostle makes of a certain defect in the Christian Hebrews, to whom he wrote. Wherein we may observe,

1. What the defect complained of is, viz. A want of such a proficiency in the knowledge of the doctrines and mysteries of religion, as might have been expected of them. The apostle complains of them, that they had not made that progress

* Dated November, 1739.

in their acquaintance with the things of divinity, or things taught in the oracles of God, which they ought to have made. And he means to reprove them, not merely for their deficiency in *spiritual* and *experimental* knowledge of divine things, but for their deficiency in a *doctrinal* acquaintance with the principles of religion, and the truths of Christian divinity; as is evident by several things.

It appears by the manner in which the apostle introduces this complaint or reproof. The occasion of his introducing it, is this: In the next verse but one preceding, he mentions Christ's being an high priest after the order of Melchizedek: "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek." This Melchizedek being in the Old Testament, which was the oracles of God, held forth as an eminent type of Christ, and the account we there have of Melchizedek containing many gospel mysteries, these the apostle was willing to point out to the Christian Hebrews. But he apprehended, that through their weakness in knowledge, and little acquaintance in mysteries of that nature, they would not understand him; and therefore breaks off for the present from saying any thing about Melchizedek. Thus, in verse 11, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered; seeing ye are dull of hearing;" i. e. there are many things concerning Melchizedek, which contain wonderful gospel mysteries, and which I would take notice of to you, were it not that I am afraid, that through your dullness and backwardness in understanding these things, you would only be puzzled and confounded by my discourse, and so receive no benefit; and that it would be too hard for you, as meat that is too strong.

Then come in the words of the text: "For when, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." As much as to say, Indeed it might have been expected of you, that you should have known enough of divinity, and the holy scriptures, to be able to understand and digest such mysteries: But it is not so with you."

Again, The apostle speaks of their proficiency in such knowledge as is conveyed and received by *human* teaching; as appears by that expression, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers;" which includes not only a practical and experimental, but also a doctrinal knowledge of the truths and mysteries of religion.

Again, The apostle speaks of such a knowledge, whereby Christians are enabled to digest strong meat; i. e. to understand those things in divinity which are more abstruse and difficult to be understood, and which require great skill in things of this nature. This is more fully expressed in the two next verses: For every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Again, It is such a knowledge, that proficiency in it shall carry persons beyond the first principles of religion. As here; "Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." Therefore the apostle, in the beginning of the next chapter, advises them, "to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection."

2. We may observe wherein the fault of this defect appears, viz. in that they had not made proficiency according to their time. For the time, they ought to have been teachers. As they were Christians, their business was to learn and gain Christian knowledge. They were scholars in the school of Christ; and if they had improved their time in learning, as they ought to have done, they might, by the time when the apostle wrote, have been fit to be teachers in this school. To whatever business any one is devoted, it may be expected that his perfection in it shall be answerable to the time he has had to learn and perfect himself....Christians should not always remain babes, but should grow in Christian knowledge; and, leaving the food of babes, which is milk, should learn to digest strong meat.

DOCTRINE.

Every Christian should make a business of endeavoring to grow in knowledge in divinity.

This is indeed esteemed the business of divines and ministers: It is commonly thought to be their work, by the study of the scriptures, and other instructive books, to gain knowledge; and most seem to think that it may be left to them, as what belongeth not to others. But if the apostle had entertained this notion, he would never have blamed the Christian Hebrews for not having acquired knowledge enough to be teachers: Or if he had thought, that this concerned Christians in general, only as a thing by the by, and that their time should not, in a considerable measure, be taken up with this business; he never would have so much blamed them, that their proficiency in knowledge had not been answerable to the time which they had had to learn.

In handling this subject, I shall show,

1. What divinity is.

2. What kind of knowledge in divinity is intended in the doctrine.

3. Why knowledge in divinity is necessary.

4. Why all Christians should make a business of endeavoring to grow in this knowledge.

I. I shall very briefly show what divinity is.

Various definitions have been given of it by those who have treated on the subject. I shall not now stand to enquire which, according to the rules of art, is the most accurate definition; but shall so define or describe it, as I think has the greatest tendency to convey a notion of it to this auditory.

By divinity is meant, That science or doctrine which comprehends all those truths and rules which concern the great business of religion. There are various kinds of arts and sciences taught and learned in the schools, which are conversant

about various objects; about the works of nature in general, as philosophy; or the visible heavens, as astronomy; or the sea, as navigation; or the earth, as geography; or the body of man, as physic and anatomy; or the soul of man, with regard to its natural powers and qualities, as logic and pneumatology; or about human government, as politics and jurisprudence. But there is one science, or one certain kind of knowledge and doctrine, which is above all the rest, as it is concerning God and the great business of religion: *This is divinity;* which is not learned, as other sciences, merely by the improvement of man's natural reason, but is taught by God himself in a certain book that he hath given for that end, full of instruction. This is the rule which God hath given to the world to be their guide in searching after this kind of knowledge, and is a summary of all things of this nature needful for us to know. Upon this account divinity is rather called a doctrine, than an art or science.

Indeed there is what is called *natural religion* or *divinity*. There are many truths concerning God, and our duty to him, which are evident by the light of nature. But Christian divinity, properly so called, is not evident by the light of nature; it depends on revelation. Such are our circumstances now in our fallen state, that nothing which it is needful for us to know concerning God, is manifest by the light of nature in the manner in which it is necessary for us to know it. For the knowledge of no truth in divinity is of any significance to us, any otherwise than, as it some way or other belongs to the gospel scheme, or as it relates to a Mediator. But the light of nature teaches us no truth of divinity in this manner. Therefore it cannot be said, that we come to the knowledge of any part of Christian divinity by the light of nature. The light of nature teaches no truth as it is in Jesus. It is only the word of God, contained in the Old and New Testament, which teaches us Christian divinity.

Divinity comprehends all that is taught in the scriptures, and so all that we need know, or is to be known, concerning God and Jesus Christ, concerning our duty to God, and our

happiness in God. Divinity is commonly defined, *the doctrine of living to God;* and by some who seem to be more accurate, *the doctrine of living to God by Christ*. It comprehends all Christian doctrines as they are in Jesus, and all Christian rules directing us in living to God by Christ. There is nothing in divinity, no one doctrine, no promise, no rule, but what some way or other relates to the Christian and divine life, or our living to God by Christ. They all relate to this, in two respects, viz. as they tend to promote our living to God here in this world, in a life of faith and holiness, and also as they tend to bring us to a life of perfect holiness and happiness, in the full enjoyment of God hereafter....But I hasten to the

II. Thing proposed, viz. To show what kind of knowledge in divinity is intended in the doctrine.

Here I would observe,

1. That there are two kinds of knowledge of the things of divinity, viz. *speculative* and *practical*, or in other terms, *natural* and *spiritual*. The former remains only in the head. No other faculty but the understanding is concerned in it. It consists in having a natural or rational knowledge of the things of religion, or such a knowledge as is to be obtained by the natural exercise of our own faculties, without any special illumination of the Spirit of God. The latter rests not entirely in the head, or in the speculative ideas of things; but the heart is concerned in it: It principally consists in the sense of the heart. The mere intellect, without the heart, the will or the inclination, is not the seat of it. And it may not only be called seeing, but feeling or tasting. Thus there is a difference between having a right speculative notion of the doctrines contained in the word of God, and having a due sense of them in the heart. In the former consists speculative or natural knowledge of the things of divinity; in the latter consists the spiritual or practical knowledge of them.

2. Neither of these is intended in the doctrine exclusively of the other: But it is intended that we should seek the former in order to the latter. The latter, even a spiritual and prac-

tical knowledge of divinity, is of the greatest importance ; for a speculative knowledge of it, without a spiritual knowledge, is in vain and to no purpose, but to make our condemnation the greater. Yet a speculative knowledge is also of infinite importance in this respect, that without it we can have no spiritual or practical knowledge ; as may be shown by and by.

I have already shown, that the apostle speaks not only of a spiritual knowledge, but of such knowledge as can be acquired, and communicated from one to another. Yet it is not to be thought, that he means this exclusively of the other. But he would have the Christian Hebrews seek the one, in order to the other. Therefore the former is first and most directly intended ; it is intended that Christians should, by reading and other proper means, seek a good rational knowledge of the things of divinity. The latter is more indirectly intended, since it is to be sought by the other, as its end....But I proceed to the

III. Thing proposed, viz. To show the usefulness and necessity of knowledge in divinity.

1. There is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit, but by knowledge. All teaching is in vain, without learning. Therefore the preaching of the gospel would be wholly to no purpose, if it conveyed no knowledge to the mind. There is an order of men whom Christ has appointed on purpose to be teachers in his church. They are to teach the things of divinity. But they teach in vain, if no knowledge in these things is gained by their teaching. It is impossible that their teaching and preaching should be a mean of grace, or of any good in the hearts of their hearers, any otherwise than by knowledge imparted to the understanding. Otherwise it would be of as much benefit to the auditory, if the minister should preach in some unknown tongue. All the difference is, that preaching in a known tongue conveys something to the understanding, which preaching in an unknown tongue doth not. On this account, such preaching must be unprofitable. Men in such

things receive nothing, when they understand nothing; and are not at all edified, unless some knowledge be conveyed; agreeably to the apostle's arguing in 1 Cor xiv. 2....6.

No speech can be any mean of grace, but by conveying knowledge. Otherwise the speech is as much lost as if there had been no man there, and he that spoke, had spoken only into the air; as it follows in the passage just quoted, verse 6....10. He that doth not understand, can receive no faith, nor any other grace; for God deals with man as with a rational creature; and when faith is in exercise, it is not about something he knows not what. Therefore hearing is absolutely necessary to faith; because hearing is necessary to understanding, Rom. x. 14. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

So there can be no love without knowledge. It is not according to the nature of the human soul, to love an object which is entirely unknown. The heart cannot be set upon an object of which there is no idea in the understanding. The reasons which induce the soul to love, must first be understood, before they can have a reasonable influence on the heart.

God hath given us the Bible, which is a book of instructions. But this book can be of no manner of profit to us, any otherwise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind: It can profit us no more than if it were written in the Chinese or Tartarian language, of which we know not one word.

So the sacraments of the gospel can have a proper effect no other way, than by conveying some knowledge. They represent certain things by visible signs. And what is the end of signs, but to convey some knowledge of the things signified? Such is the nature of man, that nothing can come at the heart, but through the door of the understanding: And there can be no spiritual knowledge of that of which there is not first a rational knowledge. It is impossible that any one should see the truth or excellency of any doctrine of the gospel, who knows not what that doctrine is. A man cannot see the wonderful excellency and love of Christ in doing such and

such things for sinners, unless his understanding be first informed how those things were done. He cannot have a taste of the sweetness and divine excellency of such and such things contained in divinity, unless he first have a notion that there are such and such things.

2. Without knowledge in divinity, none would differ from the most ignorant and barbarous Heathens. The Heathens remain in gross Heathenish darkness, because they are not instructed, and have not obtained the knowledge of the truths of divinity. So if we live under the preaching of the gospel, this will make us to differ from them, only by conveying to us more knowledge of the things of divinity.

3. If man have no knowledge of these things, the faculty of reason in him will be wholly in vain. The faculty of reason and understanding was given for actual understanding and knowledge. If a man have no actual knowledge, the faculty or capacity of knowing is of no use to him. And if he have actual knowledge, yet if he be destitute of the knowledge of those things which are the last end of his being, and for the sake of the knowledge of which he had more understanding given him than the beasts; then still his faculty of reason is in vain; he might as well have been a beast, as a man with this knowledge. But the things of divinity are the things to know which we had the faculty of reason given us. They are the things which appertain to the end of our being, and to the great business for which we are made. Therefore a man cannot have his faculty of understanding to any purpose, any further than he hath knowledge of the things of divinity.

So that this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary. Other kinds of knowledge may be very useful. Some other sciences, such as astronomy, and natural philosophy, and geography, may be very excellent in their kind. But the knowledge of this divine science is infinitely more useful and important than that of all other sciences whatever.

IV. I come now to the fourth, and principal thing proposed under the doctrine, viz. to give the reasons why all Christ-

ians should make a business of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of divinity. This implies two things.

1. That Christians ought not to content themselves with such degrees of knowledge in divinity as they have already obtained. It should not satisfy them, that they know as much as is absolutely necessary to salvation, but should seek to make progress.

2. That this endeavoring to make progress in such knowledge ought not to be attended to as a thing by the by, but all Christians should make a business of it: They should look upon it as a part of their daily business, and no small part of it neither. It should be attended to as a considerable part of the work of their high calling. The reason of both these may appear in the following things.

(1.) Our business should doubtless much consist in employing those faculties, by which we are distinguished from the beasts, about those things which are the main end of those faculties. The reason why we have faculties superior to those of the brutes given us, is, that we are indeed designed for a superior employment. That which the Creator intended should be our main employment, is something above what he intended the beasts for, and therefore hath given us superior powers. Therefore, without doubt, it should be a considerable part of our business to improve those superior faculties. But the faculty by which we are chiefly distinguished from the brutes, is the faculty of understanding. It follows then, that we should make it our chief business to improve this faculty, and should by no means prosecute it as a business by the by. For us to make the improvement of this faculty a business by the by, is in effect for us to make the faculty of understanding itself a by faculty, if I may so speak, a faculty of less importance than others; whereas indeed it is the highest faculty we have.

But we cannot make a business of the improvement of our intellectual faculty, any otherwise than by making a business of improving ourselves in actual understanding and knowledge. So that those who make not this very much their bus-

ness; but instead of improving their understanding to acquire knowledge, are chiefly devoted to their inferior powers, to provide wherewithal to please their senses, and gratify their animal appetites, and so rather make their understnding a servant to their inferior powers, than their inferior powers servants to their understanding; not only behavethemselves in a manner not becoming Christians, but also act as if they had forgotten that they are men, and that God hath set them above the brutes, by giving them understanding.

God hath given to man some things in common with the brutes, as his outward senses, his bodily appetites, a capacity of bodily pleasure and pain, and other animal faculties: And some things he hath given him superior to the brutes, the chief of which is a faculty of understanding and reason. Now God never gave man those faculties whereby he is above the brutes, to be subject to those which he hath in common with the brutes. This would be great confusion, and equivalent to making man to be a servant to the beasts. On the contrary, he has given those inferior powers to be employed in subserviency to man's understanding; and therefore it must be a great part of man's principal business, to improve his understanding by acquiring knowledge. If so, then it will follow, that it should be a main part of his business to improve his understanding in acquiring divine knowledge, or the knowledge of the things of divinity; for the knowledge of these things is the principal end of this faculty. God gave man the faculty of understanding, chiefly, that he might understand divine things.

The wiser Heathens were sensible that the main business of man was the improvement and exercise of his understanding. But they were in the dark, as they knew not the object about which the understanding should chiefly be employed. That science which many of them thought should chiefly employ the understanding, was philosophy; and accordingly they made it their chief business to study it. But we who enjoy the light of the gospel are more happy; we are not left, as to this particular, in the dark. God hath told us about what

things we should chiefly employ our understandings, having given us a book full of divine instructions, holding forth many glorious objects about which all rational creatures should chiefly employ their understandings. These instructions are accommodated to persons of all capacities and conditions, and proper to be studied, not only by men of learning, but by persons of every character, learned and unlearned, young and old, men and women. Therefore the acquisition of knowledge in these things should be a main business of all those who have the advantage of enjoying the Holy Scriptures.

(2.) The things of divinity are things of superlative excellency, and are worthy that all should make a business of endeavoring to grow in the knowledge of them. There are no things so worthy to be known as these things. They are as much above those things which are treated of in other sciences, as heaven is above the earth. God himself the eternal Three in one, is the chief object of this science: In the next place, Jesus Christ, as Godman and Mediator, and the glorious work of redemption, the most glorious work that ever was wrought: Then the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchased by Christ, and promised in the gospel; the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of men; our duty to God, and the way in which we ourselves may become like angels, and like God himself in our measure: All these are objects of this science.

Such things as these have been the main subject of the study of the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the most excellent men that ever were in the world, and are also the subject of the study of the angels in heaven; 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12.

These things are so excellent and worthy to be known, that the knowledge of them will richly pay for all the pains and labor of an earnest seeking of it. If there were a great treasure of gold and pearls hid in the earth, but should accidentally be found, and should be opened among us with such circumstances that all might have as much as they could gather of it; would not every one think it worth his while to make a

business of gathering it while it should last? But that treasure of divine knowledge, which is contained in the Scriptures, and is provided for every one to gather to himself as much of it as he can, is a far more rich treasure than any one of gold and pearls. How busy are all sorts of men, all over the world, in getting riches? But this knowledge is a far better kind of riches, than that after which they so diligently and laboriously pursue.

3. The things of divinity not only concern ministers, but are of infinite importance to all Christians. It is not with the doctrines of divinity as it is with the doctrines of philosophy and other sciences. These last are generally speculative points, which are of little concern in human life; and it very little alters the case as to our temporal or spiritual interests, whether we know them or not. Philosophers differ about them, some being of one opinion, and others of another. And while they are engaged in warm disputes about them, others may well leave them to dispute among themselves, without troubling their heads much about them; it being of little concern to them, whether the one or the other be in the right.

But it is not thus in matters of divinity. The doctrines of this nearly concern every one. They are about those things which relate to every man's eternal salvation and happiness. The common people cannot say, Let us leave these matters to ministers and divines; let them dispute them out among themselves as they can; they concern not us: For they are of infinite importance to every man. Those doctrines of divinity which relate to the essence, attributes, and subsistencies of God, concern all; as it is of infinite importance to common people, as well as to ministers, to know what kind of being God is. For he is the Being who hath made us all, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being;" who is the Lord of all; the Being to whom we are all accountable; is the last end of our being, and the only fountain of our happiness.

The doctrines also which relate to Jesus Christ and his mediation, his incarnation, his life and death, his resurrection

and ascension, his sitting at the right hand of the Father, his satisfaction and intercession, infinitely concern common people as well as divines. They stand in as much need of this Saviour, and of an interest in his person and offices, and the things which he hath done and suffered, as ministers and divines.

The same may be said of the doctrines which relate to the manner of a sinner's justification, or the way in which he becomes interested in the mediation of Christ. They equally concern all; for all stand in equal necessity of justification before God. That eternal condemnation, to which we are all naturally exposed, is equally dreadful. So with respect to those doctrines of divinity, which relate to the work of the Spirit of God on the heart, in the application of redemption in our effectual calling and sanctification, all are equally concerned in them. There is no doctrine of divinity whatever, which doth not some way or other concern the eternal interest of every Christian. None of the things which God hath taught us in his word are needless speculations, or trivial matters; all of them are indeed important points.

4. We may argue from the great things which God hath done in order to give us instruction in these things. As to other sciences, he hath left us to ourselves, to the light of our own reason. But the things of divinity being of infinitely greater importance to us, he hath not left us to an uncertain guide; but hath himself given us a revelation of the truth in these matters, and hath done very great things to convey and confirm to us this revelation; raising up many prophets in different ages, immediately inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and confirming their doctrine with innumerable miracles or wonderful works out of the established course of nature. Yea, he raised up a succession of prophets, which was upheld for several ages.

It was very much for this end that God separated the people of Israel, in so wonderful a manner, from all other people, and kept them separate; that to them he might commit the oracles of God, and that from them they might be communi-

cated to the world. He hath also often sent angels to bring divine instructions to men; and hath often himself appeared to men in miraculous symbols or representations of his presence; and now in these last days hath sent his own Son into the world, to be his great prophet, to teach us divinity. Heb. 1. at the beginning. By means of all, God hath given a book of divine instructions, which contains the sum of divinity. Now, these things hath God done, not only for the instruction of ministers and men of learning; but for the instruction of all men, of all sorts, learned and unlearned, men, women, and children. And certainly if God doth such great things to *teach* us, we ought not to do little to *learn*.

God hath not made giving instructions to men in things of divinity a business by the by; but a business which he hath undertaken and prosecuted in a course of great and wonderful dispensations, as an affair in which his heart hath been greatly engaged; which is sometimes in scripture signified by the expression of God's rising early to teach us, and to send prophets and teachers to us. Jer. vii. 25. "Since that day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them." And so, verse 13. "I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking." This is a figurative speech, signifying, that God hath not done this as a by business, but as a business of great importance, in which he took great care, and had his heart much engaged; because persons are wont to rise early to prosecute such business as they are earnestly engaged in.....If God hath been so engaged in teaching, certainly we should not be negligent in learning; nor should we make growing in knowledge a by business, but a great part of the business of our lives.

5. It may be argued from the abundance of the instructions which God hath given us, from the largeness of that book which God hath given to teach us divinity, and from the great variety that is therein contained. Much was taught by Moses of old, which we have transmitted down to us; after that, other books were from time to time added; much is

taught us by David and Solomon ; and many and excellent are the instructions communicated by the prophets : Yet God did not think all this enough, but after this sent Christ and his apostles, by whom there is added a great and excellent treasure to that holy book, which is to be our rule in the study of divinity.

This book was written for the use of all ; all are directed to search the scriptures. John v. 39. " Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life ; and they are they that testify of me ;" and Isaiah xxxiv. 16. " Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." They that read and understand are pronounced blessed. Rev. i. 3. " Blessed is he that readeth, and they that understand the words of this prophecy." If this be true of that particular book of the *Revelation*, much more is it true of the Bible in general. Nor is it to be believed that God would have given instructions in such abundance, if he had intended that receiving instruction should be only a by concernment with us.

It is to be considered, that all those abundant instructions which are contained in the scriptures were written for that end, that they might be understood ; otherwise they are not instructions. That which is not given that the learner may understand it, is not given for the learner's instruction ; and unless we endeavor to grow in the knowledge of divinity, a very great part of those instructions will to us be in vain ; for we can receive benefit by no more of the scriptures than we understand, no more than if they were locked up in an unknown tongue. We have reason to bless God that he hath given us such various and plentiful instruction in his word ; but we shall be hypocritical in so doing, if we, after all, content ourselves with but little of this instruction.

When God hath opened a very large treasure before us, for the supply of our wants, and we thank him that he hath given us so much ; if at the same time we be willing to remain destitute of the greatest part of it, because we are too lazy to gather it, this will not show the sincerity of our thankfulness. We are now under much greater advantages to ac-

quire knowledge in divinity, than the people of God were of old, because since that time, the canon of scripture is much increased. But if we be negligent of our advantages, we may be never the better for them, and may remain with as little knowledge as they.

6. However diligently we apply ourselves, there is room enough to increase our knowledge in divinity, without coming to an end. None have this excuse to make for not diligently applying themselves to gain knowledge in divinity, that they know all already; nor can they make this excuse, that they have no need diligently to apply themselves, in order to know all that is to be known. None can excuse themselves for want of business in which to employ themselves. Here is room enough to employ ourselves for ever in this divine science, with the utmost application. Those who have applied themselves most closely, have studied the longest, and have made the greatest attainments in this knowledge, know but little of what is to be known. The subject is inexhaustible. That divine Being, who is the main subject of this science, is infinite, and there is no end to the glory of his perfections. His works at the same time are wonderful, and cannot be found out to perfection; especially the work of redemption, which is that work of God about which the science of divinity is chiefly conversant, is full of unsearchable wonders.

The word of God, which is given for our instruction in divinity, contains enough in it to employ us to the end of our lives, and then we shall leave enough uninvestigated to employ the heads of the ablest divines to the end of the world. The Psalmist found an end to the things that are human; but he could never find an end to what is contained in the word of God: Psalm cxix. 96. "I have seen an end to all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad." There is enough in this divine science to employ the understandings of saints and angels to all eternity.

7. It doubtless concerns every one to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of things which pertain to his profession or principal calling. If it concerns men to excel in any thing, or

in any wisdom or knowledge at all, it certainly concerns them to excel in the affairs of their main profession and work. But the calling and work of every Christian is to live to God. This is said to be his *high calling*, Phil. iii. 14. This is the business, and, if I may so speak, the *trade* of a Christian, his main work, and indeed should be his only work. No business should be done by a Christian, but as it is some way or other a part of this. Therefore certainly the Christian should endeavor to be well acquainted with those things which belong to this work, that he may fulfil it, and be thoroughly furnished to it.

It becomes one who is called to be a soldier, and to go a warfare, to endeavor to excel in the art of war. It becomes one who is called to be a mariner, and to spend his life in sailing the ocean, to endeavor to excel in the art of navigation. It becomes one who professes to be a physician, and devotes himself to that work, to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of those things which pertain to the art of physic. So it becomes all such as profess to be Christians, and to devote themselves to the practice of Christianity, to endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divinity.

8. It may be argued from this, that God hath appointed an order of men for this end, to assist persons in gaining knowledge in these things. He hath appointed them to be teachers. 1 Cor. xii. 28; and God hath set some in the church; first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers: Eph. iv. 11, 12. "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." If God hath set them to be teachers, making that their business, then he hath made it their business to impart knowledge. But what kind of knowledge? Not the knowledge of philosophy, or of human laws, or of mechanical arts, but of divinity.

If God have made it the business of some to be teachers, it will follow, that he hath made it the business of others to be learners; for teachers and learners are correlates, one of

which was never intended to be without the other. God hath never made it the duty of some to take pains to teach those who are not obliged to take pains to learn. He hath not commanded ministers to spend themselves, in order to impart knowledge to those who are not obliged to apply themselves to receive it.

The name by which Christians are commonly called in the New Testament is *disciples*, the signification of which word is *scholars* or *learners*. All Christians are put into the school of Christ, where their business is to learn, or receive knowledge from Christ, their common master and teacher, and from those inferior teachers appointed by him to instruct in his name.

9. God hath in the scriptures plainly revealed it to be his will, that all Christians should diligently endeavor to excel in the knowledge of divine things. It is the revealed will of God, that Christians should not only have some knowledge of things of this nature, but that they should be *enriched with all knowledge:* 1 Cor. i. 4, 5. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God that is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge." So the apostle earnestly prayed, that the Christian Philippians might abound more and more, not only in love, but in Christian knowledge; Philip. i. 9. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment." So the Apostle Peter advises to "give all diligence, to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge." 2 Pet. i. 5. And the Apostle Paul, in the next chapter to that wherein is the text, counsels the Christian Hebrews, leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection. He would by no means have them always to rest only in those fundamental doctrines of repentance, and faith, and the resurrection from the dead, and the eternal judgment, in which they were indoctrinated when they were first baptised, and had the apostles' hands laid on them, at their first initiation in Christianity. See Heb. vi. at the beginning.

APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of this doctrine is, to exhort all diligently to endeavor to gain this kind of knowledge.

Consider yourselves as scholars or disciples, put into the school of Christ; and therefore be diligent to make proficiency in Christian knowledge. Content not yourselves with this, that you have been taught your catechism in your childhood, and that you know as much of the principles of religion as is necessary to salvation. So you will be guilty of what the apostle warns against, viz. going no further than laying the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c.

You are all called to be Christians, and this is your profession. Endeavor, therefore, to acquire knowledge in things which pertain to your profession. Let not your teachers have cause to complain, that while they spend and are spent, to impart knowledge to you, you take little pains to learn. It is a great encouragement to an instructor, to have such to teach as make a business of learning, bending their minds to it. This makes teaching a pleasure, when otherwise it will be a very heavy and burdensome task.

You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the scriptures; labor to understand as much of what he saith as you can. God hath made you all reasonable creatures; therefore let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with having so much knowledge as is thrown in your way, and as you receive in some sense unavoidably by the frequent inculcation of divine truth in the preaching of the word, of which you are obliged to be hearers, or as you accidentally gain in conversation; but let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labor with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold.

Especially I would advise those that are young to employ themselves in this way. Men are never too old to learn; but the time of youth is especially the time for learning; it is especially proper for gaining and storing up knowledge. Further, to stir up all, both old and young, to this duty, let me entreat you to consider,

1. If you apply yourselves diligently to this work, you will not want employment, when you are at leisure from your common secular business. In this way, you may find something in which you may profitably employ yourselves these long winter evenings. You will find something else to do, besides going about from house to house, spending one hour after another in unprofitable conversation, or, at best, to no other purpose but to amuse yourselves, to fill up and wear away your time. And it is to be feared that very much of the time that is spent in our winter evening visits, is spent to a much worse purpose than that which I have now mentioned. Solomon tells us, Prov. x. 19. "That in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin." And is not this verified in those who find nothing else to do for so great a part of the winter, but to go to one another's houses, and spend the time in such talk as comes next, or such as any one's present disposition happens to suggest?

Some diversion is doubtless lawful; but for Christians to spend so much of their time, so many long evenings, in no other conversation than that which tends to divert and amuse, if nothing worse, is a sinful way of spending time, and tends to poverty of soul at least, if not to outward poverty: Prov. xiv. 23. "In all labor there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to *penury*." Besides, when persons for so much of their time have nothing else to do but to sit, and talk, and chat in one another's chimney corners, there is great danger of falling into foolish and sinful conversation, venting their corrupt dispositions, in talking against others, expressing their jealousies and evil surmises concerning their neighbors; not considering what Christ hath said, Matth. xii 36. "Of

every idle word that men shall speak, shall they give account in the day of judgment."

If you would comply with what you have heard from this doctrine, you would find something else to spend your winters in, one winter after another, besides contention, or talking about those public affairs which tend to contention. Young people might find something else to do, besides spending their time in vain company; something that would be much more profitable to themselves, as it would really turn to some good account; something, in doing which they would both be more out of the devil's way, the way of temptation, and be more in the way of duty, and of a divine blessing. And even aged people would have something to employ themselves in, after they are become incapable of bodily labor. Their time, as is now often the case, would not lie heavy upon their hands, as they would, with both profit and pleasure, be engaged in searching the scriptures, and in comparing and meditating upon the various truths which they should find there.

2. This would be a noble way of spending your time. The Holy Spirit gives the Bereans this epithet, because they diligently employed themselves in this business: Acts xvii. 11. "These were more *noble* than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." This is very much the employment of heaven. The inhabitants of that world spend much of their time in searching into the great things of divinity, and endeavoring to acquire knowledge in them, as we are told of the angels, 1 Pet. i. 12. "Which things the angels desire to look into." This will be very agreeable to what you hope will be your business to all eternity, as you doubtless hope to join in the same employment with the angels of light. Solomon says, Prov. xxv. 2. "It is the honor of kings to search out a matter;" and certainly, above all others, to search out divine matters. Now, if this be the honor even of kings, is it not equally, if not much more your honor?

3. This is a pleasant way of improving time. Knowledge is pleasant and delightful to intelligent creatures, and above all the knowledge of divine things; for in them are the most excellent truths, and the most beautiful and amiable objects held forth to view. However tedious the labor necessarily attending this business may be, yet the knowledge once obtained will richly requite the pains taken to obtain it. "When wisdom entereth the heart, knowledge is pleasant to the soul," Prov. ii. 10.

4. This knowledge is exceeding useful in Christian practice. Such as have much knowledge in divinity have great means and advantages for spiritual and saving knowledge; for no means of grace, as was said before, have their effect on the heart, otherwise than by the knowledge they impart. The more you have of a rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, the more opportunity will there be, when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart, to see the excellency of these things, and to taste the sweetness of them. The Heathens, who have no rational knowledge of the things of the gospel, have no opportunity to see the excellency of them; and therefore the more rational knowledge of these things you have, the more opportunity and advantage you have to see the divine excellency and glory of them.

Again, The more knowledge you have of divine things, the better will you know your duty; your knowledge will be of great use to direct you as to your duty in particular cases. You will also be the better furnished against the temptations of the devil. For the devil often takes the advantage of persons' ignorance to ply them with temptations which otherwise would have no hold of them.

By having much knowledge, you will be under greater advantages to conduct yourselves with prudence and discretion in your Christian course, and so to live much more to the honor of God and religion. Many who mean well, and are full of a good spirit, yet for want of prudence, conduct themselves so as to wound religion. Many have a zeal of God, which doth more hurt than good, because it is not according

to knowledge, Rom. x. 2. The reason why many good men behave no better in many instances, is not so much that they want grace, as that they want knowledge.

Beside, an increase of knowledge would be a great help to profitable conversation. It would supply you with matter for conversation when you come together, or when you visit your neighbors: And so you would have less temptation to spend the time in such conversation as tends to your own and others' hurt.

5. Consider the advantages you are under to grow in the knowledge of divinity. We are under far greater advantages to gain much knowledge in divinity now, than God's people under the Old Testament, both because the canon of scripture is so much enlarged since that time, and also because evangelical truths are now so much more plainly revealed. So that common men are now in some respects under advantages to know more of divinity, than the greatest prophets were then. Thus that saying of Christ is in a sense applicable to us, Luke x. 23, 24. "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." We are in some respects under far greater advantages for gaining knowledge, now in these latter ages of the church, than Christians were formerly; especially by reason of the art of printing, of which God hath given us the benefit, whereby Bibles and other books of divinity are exceedingly multiplied, and persons may now be furnished with helps for the obtaining of Christian knowledge, at a much easier and cheaper rate than they formerly could.

6. We know not what opposition we may meet with in the principles which we hold in divinity. We know that there are many adversaries to the gospel and its truths. If therefore we embrace those truths, we must expect to be attacked by the said adversaries; and unless we be well informed concerning divine things, how shall we be able to defend ourselves? Beside, the Apostle Peter enjoins it upon us, al-

ways to be ready to give an answer to every man who asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. But this we cannot expect to do without considerable knowledge in divine things.

I shall now conclude my discourse with some *directions* for the acquisition of this knowledge.

1. Be assiduous in reading the holy scriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected. Every man of common understanding who can read, may, if he please, become well acquainted with the scriptures. And what an excellent attainment would this be!

2. Content not yourselves with only a cursory reading, without regarding the sense. This is an ill way of reading, to which, however, many accustom themselves all their days. When you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Take notice of the drift of the discourse, and compare one scripture with another. For the scripture, by the harmony of the different parts of it, casts great light upon itself. We are expressly directed by Christ, to *search* the scriptures, which evidently intends something more than a mere cursory reading. And use means to find out the meaning of the scripture. When you have it explained in the preaching of the word, take notice of it; and if at any time a scripture that you did not understand be cleared up to your satisfaction, mark it, lay it up, and if possible remember it.

3. Procure, and diligently use other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant, which might greatly forward you in this knowledge, and afford you a very profitable and pleasant entertainment in your leisure hours. There is doubtless a great defect in many, that through a loathness to be at a little expense, they furnish themselves with no more helps of this nature. They have a few books indeed, which now and then on sabbath days they read; but they have had them so long, and read them so often, that they are weary of them, and it is now become a dull story, a mere task to read them.

4. Improve conversation with others to this end. How much might persons promote each others' knowledge in divine things, if they would improve conversation as they might; if men that are ignorant were not ashamed to show their ignorance, and were willing to learn of others; if those that have knowledge would communicate it, without pride and ostentation; and if all were more disposed to enter on such conversation as would be for their mutual edification and instruction.

5. Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause, and to enable you to dispute with others; but seek it for the benefit of your souls, and in order to practice. If applause be your end, you will not be so likely to be led to the knowledge of the truth, but may justly, as often is the case of those who are proud of their knowledge, be led into error to your own perdition. This being your end, if you should obtain much rational knowledge, it would not be likely to be of any benefit to you, but would puff you up with pride: 1 Cor. viii. 1. "Knowledge puffeth up."

6. Seek to God, that he would direct you, and bless you, in this pursuit after knowledge. This is the apostle's direction, James i. 5. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." God is the fountain of all divine knowledge. Prov. ii. 6. "The Lord giveth wisdom: Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Labor to be sensible of your own blindness and ignorance, and your need of the help of God, lest you be led into error, instead of true knowledge. 1 Cor. iii. 18 "If any man would be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

7. Practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more The Psalmist warmly recommends this way of seeking knowledge in divinity, from his own experience, Psal. cxix. 100. "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." Christ also recommends the same, John vii. 17. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

SERMON XVII.*

God the best portion of the Christian.

PSALM lxxiii. 25.

WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT THEE? AND THERE IS NONE UPON EARTH THAT I DESIRE BESIDES THEE.

THE Psalmist, in this psalm, relates the great difficulty that he met with in his own mind, from the consideration of the prosperity of wicked men. He tells us, ver. 2 and 3, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipt. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." In the 4th and following verses, he informs us, what it was he had observed in the wicked, which was his temptation. In the first place, he observed, that they were very prosperous, and all things went well with them. He then observed their behavior in their prosperity, and the use which they made of it; and that God, notwithstanding such an use or abuse, continued their prosperity, as in the 6th and following verses. Then the Psalmist tells us by what means he was helped out of this difficulty, viz. by going into the sanctuary, verses 16, 17; and proceeds to inform

* Dated April, 1736.

us what considerations they were which helped him, viz. these three :

1. The consideration of the miserable end of wicked men. However they prosper for the present, yet they come to a woful end at last, ver. 18, 19, 20

2. The consideration of the blessed end of the saints. Although the saints, while they live, may be afflicted, yet they come to an happy end at last, ver. 21, 22, 23, 24.

3. The consideration, that the godly have a much better portion than the wicked, even though they have no other portion but God; as in the text and following verse. If it be so, that the wicked are in prosperity, and are not in trouble as other men; yet the godly, though they be in affliction, are in a state infinitely better than the wicked, because they have God for their portion. However they may have nothing else, this is enough, without the enjoyments of wicked men; they need desire nothing else; he that hath God, hath all. Thus the Psalmist professes it was with him, in the sense and aprehension which he had of things : *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

In the verse immediately preceding, the Psalmist takes notice how the saints are happy in God, both when they are here in this world, and also when they are taken to another world. They are blessed in God in this world, in that while here God *guides them by his counsel;* and when he takes them out of this world, they are still happy, in that then God *receives them to glory.* The Psalmist having thus taken notice of the happiness of the saints in God, both while here upon earth, and also when removed into another world, was probably by this observation led, in the next verse, which is the text, to declare that he desired no other portion, either in this world or in the world to come, either in heaven or upon earth.

DOCTRINE.

It is the spirit of a truly godly man, to prefer God before all other things, either in heaven or on earth.

I. A godly man prefers God before any thing else in heaven.

1. He prefers God before any thing else that *actually is* in heaven. Every godly man hath his heart in heaven; his affections are mainly set on heaven, and what is to be had there. Heaven is his chosen country and inheritance. He hath respect to heaven, as a traveller who is on occasion abroad in a distant land hath to his own country. The traveller can content himself to be in a strange land for a while, until his present occasion and business be over; but his own native land is preferred by him to all others. Heb. xi. 13, &c. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."

So also the respect which a godly person hath to heaven, may be compared to the respect which a child, when he is abroad, hath to his father's house. He can be contented abroad for a little while; but the place to which he desires to return, and in which to dwell, is his own home at his father's house. Heaven is the true saint's father's house. John xiv. 2. "In my Father's house are many mansions." John xx. 17. "I ascend to my Father and your Father."

Now, the main reason why the godly man hath his heart thus in heaven, is because God is there; that is the palace of the most high God; it is the place where God is gloriously present, where he is to be seen, where he is to be enjoyed, where his love is gloriously manifested, where the godly may be with him, see him as he is, and love, serve, praise, and enjoy him perfectly. It is for this chiefly that a godly man desires heaven. If God and Christ were not in heaven, he would not be so earnest in seeking it, nor would he take so much pains in a laborious travel through this wilderness, nor would

the consideration that he is going to heaven when he dies, be such a comfort to him under the toils and afflictions of the world, as it now is. The martyrs would not undergo those cruel sufferings which are brought upon them by their persecutors, with that cheerfulness in a prospect of going to heaven, did they not expect to go and be with Christ, and to enjoy God there. They would not with that cheerfulness forsake all their earthly possessions, and all their earthly friends, as many thousands of them have done, and wander about in poverty and banishment, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, in hopes of exchanging their earthly for an heavenly inheritance, were it not that they hope to be with their glorious Redeemer and heavenly Father in heaven.

If God and Christ were not in heaven, however beautiful the place be, and whatever excellent creature inhabitants there be there, yet heaven would be but an empty place, it would be but an unlovely place. The believer's heart is in heaven, because his treasure is there; and that treasure is Jesus Christ, the same that we read of in Matth. xiii. 44, which is there called "a treasure hid in a field, which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all he hath, and buyeth that field."

2. A godly man prefers God before any thing else that *might be* in heaven. Not only is there nothing actually in heaven, which is in his esteem equal with God; but neither is there any thing of which he can conceive as possible to be there, which by him is esteemed and desired equally with God. Those of some nations and professions suppose quite different enjoyments to be in heaven, from those which the scriptures teach us to be there. The Mahometans, for instance, suppose that in heaven are to be enjoyed all manner of sensual delights and pleasures. Many things which Mahomet has feigned are, to the lusts and carnal appetites of men, the most agreeable that he could devise; and he flattered his followers with promises of such enjoyments in heaven.

But the true saint, if he were to contrive such an heaven as would suit him best, could not contrive one more agreeable

to his inclination and desires, than such an one as is revealed in the word of God; an heaven of the enjoyment of the glorious God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, where he shall have all sin taken away, and shall be perfectly conformed to God, where he shall have a perfect acquaintance with God, and shall spend an eternity in exalted exercises of love to God, and in the enjoyment of his love. Such an heaven is to the saint better than any Mahometan paradise; it is the best heaven that can possibly be; there is no happiness conceived of, that would be better, or that would appear so desirable to him, as this. If God were not to be enjoyed in heaven, but, instead of that, there were vast wealth, immense treasures of silver and gold, and great honor of such kind as men obtain in this world, and a fulness of the greatest sensual delights and pleasures; all these things would not make up for the want of God and Christ, and the enjoyment of them there. If it were empty of God, it would indeed be an empty melancholy place.

The godly have been made sensible, as to all creature enjoyments, that they cannot satisfy the soul, and that happiness is in God; and therefore nothing will content them but God. Offer a saint what you will, if you deny him God, he will esteem himself miserable. His soul thirsts for God, to come and appear before God. God is the centre of his desires; and as long as you keep his soul from its proper centre, it will not be at rest. The true saint sets his heart on God as the chief good.

II. It is the spirit of a godly man to prefer God before all other things on the earth.

1. The saint prefers that enjoyment of God, for which he hopes hereafter, to any thing in this world. He looketh not at the things which are seen, and are temporal, so much as at those things which are unseen and eternal, 1 Cor. iv. 18. It is but a little of God that the saint enjoys here in this world; he hath but a little acquaintance with God, and enjoys but a little of the manifestations of the divine glory and love. But God hath promised to give him himself hereafter in a full en-

joyment. And these promises of God are more precious to the saint, than the most precious earthly jewels. The gospel which contains these promises, doth therein contain greater treasures, in his esteem, than the cabinets of princes, or the mines of the Indies.

2. The saints prefer what of God may be obtained in this world before all things in the world. They not only prefer those glorious degrees of the enjoyment of God which are promised hereafter, before any thing in this world; but even such degrees as may be attained to here in the present state, though they are immensely short of what is to be enjoyed in heaven. There is a great difference in the spiritual attainments of the saints in this world. Some attain to much greater acquaintance and communion with God, and conformity to him, than others. But the highest attainments are very small in comparison with what is future.

The saints are capable of making progress in spiritual attainments, and of obtaining more of God than ever yet they have obtained; and they are of such a spirit that they earnestly desire such further attainments. Not contented with those degrees to which they have already attained, they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. It is their desire, to know more of God, to have more of his image, and to be enabled more to imitate God and Christ in their walk and conversation. The appetite of the soul of a godly man is after God and Jesus Christ, as appears by many places of scripture; as Psalm xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Psalm xlii. 1, 2. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God?" Psalm lxiii. 1. 2. "O God thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power

and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." See also, Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 2, 3, and Psalm cxxx 6. "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

Though every saint has not this longing desire after God to the same degree that the Psalmist had, yet they are all of the same spirit; they have a spirit earnestly to desire and long for more of God, to be nearer to him, to have more of his presence and of the light of his countenance, and to have more of God in their hearts. That this is the spirit of the godly in general, and not of some particular saints only, appears from Isa. xxvi. 8, 9, where not any particular saint, but the church in general speaks thus: "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

It appears also to be the spirit of the saints in general, by some expressions of the spouse or the church in the Canticle; as chapter iii. 1, 2. "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city; in the streets and broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth." So chapter v. 6, 8. "I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love."

The saints are not always in the lively exercise of such a spirit; but such a spirit they have, and sometimes they have the sensible exercise of it: They have a spirit to desire God and divine attainments, more than all earthly things. They desire and seek to be rich in grace, more than they do to get earthly riches. They seek and desire the honor which is of God, more than that which is of men, John v. 44. They desire communion with God, more than any earthly pleasures whatsoever. They are in some measure of the same spirit which the apostle expresses in Philip. iii. 8. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the

knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."

3. The saint prefers *what he hath already of God* before any thing in this world. That which was infused into his heart at his conversion, is more precious to him than any thing which the world can afford. The knowledge and acquaintance which he hath with God, though it be but little, he would not part with for any thing that the world can afford. The views which are sometimes given him of the beauty and excellency of God, are more precious to him than all the treasures of the wicked. The relation of a child in which he stands to God, the union which there is between his soul and Jesus Christ, he values more than the greatest earthly dignity; he had rather have this, than to be the child of a prince. He would not part with the honor which God hath been pleased to put on him by bringing him so near to him, to be set upon an earthly throne, or to wear an earthly crown, though it were the most splendid that ever was worn by any earthly potentate.

That image of God which is instamped on his soul, he values more than any earthly ornaments. It is, in his esteem, better to be adorned with the graces of God's Holy Spirit, than to be made to shine in jewels of gold, and the most costly pearls, or to be admired for the greatest external beauty. He values the robe of the righteousness of Christ, which he hath on his soul, more than the robes of princes. The spiritual pleasures and delights which he sometimes has in God, he prefers far before all the pleasures of sin, Psalm lxxxiv. 10. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

A saint thus prefers God before all things in this world,

1. As he prefers God before any thing else that he *possesses* in the world. Whatever temporal enjoyments he has, he prefers God to them all. If he have pleasant earthly accommodations; yet it is with respect to God, and not his earth-

ly accommodations, that he saith, as in Psalm xvi. 5, 6. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." If he be rich, yet he chiefly sets his heart, not on his earthly, but his heavenly riches. He prefers God before any earthly friend, and the favor of God before any respect that is shown him by his fellow creatures.

Although a godly man may have many earthly enjoyments, yet in his heart he sets God above them all. Although he may give these room in his heart, and too much room; yet he reserves the throne for God; Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

2. He prefers God before any earthly enjoyment of which he *hath a prospect*. The children of men commonly set their hearts more on some earthly happiness for which they hope, and after which they are seeking, than on what they have in present possession. They very much live upon vain hopes of happiness in earthly things, an happiness which they imagine is to be obtained by and by. But a godly man prefers God to any thing which he has in prospect, or is seeking in the world. He may, indeed, through the prevalence of corruption, for a season be carried away and swallowed up, with some enjoyment which he is pursuing; however, he will again come to himself; this is not the temper of the man, he is of another spirit.

3. It is the spirit of a godly man to prefer God to any earthly *enjoyment* of which he can conceive. He not only prefers him to any thing which he now possesses; but he sees nothing possessed by any of his neighbors, or any of his fellow creatures, that he has such an esteem of, as he has of God. If he could have as much worldly prosperity as he would, if he could have earthly things, just to his mind, and agreeable to his inclination; he values the portion which he has in God, above such a portion as this: He prefers Christ to earthly kingdoms.

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may learn, that whatever changes a godly man passes through, he is happy; because God, who is unchangeable, is his chosen portion. If he meet with temporal losses, and be deprived of many of his temporal enjoyments, or of all of them; yet God, whom he prefers before all those things which he hath lost, still remains, and cannot be lost. While he stays here in this changeable, troublesome world, yet he is happy, because his chosen portion, on which he builds, as his main foundation for happiness, is above the world, and above all changes. And if he die and go into another world, still he is happy, because that portion, which he prefers to all that is either in this or another world, yet remains. Whatever he be deprived of, he cannot be deprived of his chief portion; his inheritance remains sure to him.

If worldly minded men could find out a way to secure to themselves some certain earthly enjoyments, on which they mainly set their hearts, so that they could not be lost, nor impaired while they live, how great would they account the privilege, though other things which they esteem in a less degree were liable to the same uncertainty as they now are? Whereas now, those earthly enjoyments, on which men chiefly set their hearts, are often most fading. But how great is the happiness of those who have chosen the Fountain of all good, and prefer him before all things in heaven or on earth, as they can never be deprived of him to all eternity!

2. Let all by these things examine and try themselves, whether they be saints or not. As this which hath been exhibited is the spirit of the saints, so it is peculiar to them: None can use the language of the text, and say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee*, but the saints. A man's choice is that which determines his state. He that chooses God for his portion, and

prefers him to all other things, is a godly man, for *he* chooses and worships God as God. To respect God as God, is to respect him above all other things; and if any man respect God as his God, his God he is; there is an union and covenant relation between that man and the true God.

Every man is as his God is. If you would know what a man is, whether he be a godly man or not, you must inquire what his God is. If the true God be he whom he respects as his God, i. e. to whom he hath a supreme respect, and whom he regards above all; he is doubtless a godly man, a servant of the true God. But if the man have some other god, something else to which he pays a greater respect than to Jehovah, he is not a godly man; God is not his God; he doth not worship him for his God, nor doth he belong to God, as one of his people.

Inquire, therefore, how it is with you, whether you prefer God before all other things. It may sometimes be some difficulty for persons to determine this to their satisfaction; the ungodly may be deluded with false affections; the godly in dull frames may be at a loss about it. Therefore you may try yourselves as to this matter these several ways; if you cannot speak fully to one thing, yet you may perhaps to others.

(1.) What is it which chiefly makes you desire to go to heaven when you die? Indeed some have no great desire to go to heaven. They do not care to go to hell; but if they could but be safe from that, they would not much concern themselves about heaven. If it be not so with you, but you find that you have a desire to go to heaven, then inquire what it is for. Is the main reason, that you may be with God, have communion with him, and be conformed to him? That you may see God, and enjoy him there? Is the consideration that these things are to be had in heaven, that which keeps your heart, and your desires, and your expectations towards heaven?

(2.) If you could avoid death, and might have your free choice, would you choose to live always in this world without God, rather than in God's time to leave the world, in order to be with God in the full enjoyment of him? If you might live

here in earthly prosperity to all eternity, but destitute of the presence of God and communion with him, having no spiritual divine intercourse between God and your souls, God and you being strangers to each other for ever; would you choose this rather than to leave the world, in order to go and dwell in God's house in heaven, as the children of God, there to enjoy the glorious privileges of children, in an acquaintance with God, in an holy and perfect love to God, and enjoyment of him to all eternity?

(3.) Do you prefer Christ to all others as the way to heaven? He who chooses God, and prefers him, as hath been spoken of, he prefers him in each person of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the Father, as his Father; the Son, as his Saviour; the Holy Ghost, as his Sanctifier. Inquire, therefore, not only whether you choose the enjoyment of God in heaven as your highest portion and happiness, but also whether you choose Jesus Christ before all others, as your way to heaven; and that in a sense of the excellency of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him, as being that which is to the glory of Christ, and to the glory of sovereign grace. Is the way of free grace, by the blood and righteousness of the blessed and glorious Redeemer, the most excellent way to life in your esteem? Doth it add a value to the heavenly inheritance, that it is conferred in this way? Is this far better to you than to be saved by your own righteousness, by any of your own performances, or by any other mediator?

(4.) If you might go to heaven in what course you please, would you prefer to all others the way of a strict walk with God? They that prefer God as hath been represented, choose God, as you have heard, not only hereafter, but here; they choose and prefer him, not only in the end, but in the way. They had rather be with God than with any other, when they come to the end of their journey; and not only so, but they had rather have God with them than any other, while they are in the way thither. Their chosen way of going to heaven is a way of strict walking with God. They would neither fail of coming to God in the end, nor would they depart from God by

the way. They choose the way of walking with God, though it be a way of labor, and care, and selfdenial, rather than a way of sin, though it be a way of sloth, and of gratifying their lusts.

(5.) If it were so, that you were to spend your eternity here in this world, would you choose rather to live in mean and low circumstances with the gracious presence of God, than to live for ever in earthly prosperity without God in the world? If you were to spend your eternity in this world, would you rather spend it in a way of holy living, in serving and walking with God, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of the children of God, having God often manifesting himself to you as your Father, discovering to you his glory, and manifesting his love, lifting the light of his countenance upon you, as God often doth to his saints in this world; would you rather choose these things, though you should live in poverty, and with but little of the good things of this world, than to abound in a fulness of worldly things, and to live in ease and prosperity, at the same time being an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, standing in no childlike relation to God, enjoying no gracious intercourse with him, having no right in God, either to have him for your God, or to be acknowledged by him as his children? Or would such a life as this, though in ever so great earthly prosperity, be esteemed by you a miserable life?

If, after all this, there remain with you doubts, and a difficulty to determine concerning yourselves whether you do truly and sincerely prefer God to all other things, I would mention two things which are the surest ways to be determined in this matter, and which seem to be the best grounds of satisfaction in it.

1. The feeling of some particular, strong, and lively exercises of such a spirit. A person may have such a spirit as is spoken of in the doctrine, and may have the exercise of it in a low degree, and yet remain in doubt whether he have it or not, and be unable, by all his selfexamination, to come to a satisfying determination. But God is pleased at some times to give

to some of his people, such lively and strong exercises of such a spirit, and they see it so clearly, and feel it so plainly, that it puts it, at least for the present, out of doubt. They obtain such discoveries of the glory of God, and of the excellency of Christ, as do so draw forth the heart, that they know beyond all doubt or question, that they feel such a spirit as Paul spake of, when he said, "He counted all things but loss, for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord;" and they can boldly say, as in the text, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." At such times the people of God do not need any help of ministers to satisfy them whether they have the true love of God; they plainly see and feel it; and the Spirit of God then witnesseth with their spirits, that they are the children of God.

Therefore, if you would be satisfied upon this point, earnestly seek such attainments; seek that you may have such clear and lively exercises of this spirit. To this end, you must press forward, and labor to grow in grace. If you have had such experiences in times past, and they satisfied you then, yet you may again doubt. You should therefore seek that you may have them more frequently; and the way to that is, earnestly to press forward, that you may have more acquaintance with God, and have the principles of grace strengthened. This is the way to have the exercises of grace stronger, more lively, and more frequent, and so to be satisfied that you have a spirit of supreme love to God.

2. The other way is, To inquire whether you prefer God to all other things in practice, i. e. whether, when you have occasion in the course of your life to manifest by your practice which you prefer, when you must either cleave to one or the other, and must either forsake other things, or forsake God; whether then it be your manner practically to prefer God to all other things whatever, even to your dearest earthly enjoyments, to those earthly things to which your hearts are most wedded. Do you lead such lives as this? Are your lives, lives of adherence to God, and of serving God in this manner?

He that doth sincerely prefer God to all other things in his heart, he will do it in his practice. For when God and all other things come to stand in competition, that is the proper trial what a man chooses; and the manner of acting in such cases must certainly determine what the choice is in all free agents or those who act on choice. Therefore there is no sign of sincerity so much insisted on in the Bible as this, that we deny ourselves, sell all, forsake the world, take up the cross, and follow Christ whithersoever he goeth.

Therefore, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight, not as those that beat the air; but keep under your bodies, and bring them into subjection. Act not as though you counted yourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing do, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." 2 Pet. i. 5. &c. "And besides this, giving diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON XVIII.*

The Most High a Prayer hearing God.

PSALM lxv. 2.

O THOU THAT HEAREST PRAYER.

THIS psalm seems to be a psalm of praise to God for some remarkable answer of prayer, in the bestowment of some public mercy; or else was written on occasion of some special faith and confidence which David had, that his prayer would be answered. It is probable that this mercy bestowed, or expected to be bestowed, was some great public mercy, for which David had been very earnest and importunate, and had annexed a vow to his prayer; and that he had vowed a vow to God, that if he would grant him his request, he would do thus or thus, to praise and glorify God.

This seems to be the reason why he expresses himself as he does in the first verse of the psalm: "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed;" i. e. that praise which I have vowed to give thee, on the answer of my prayer, waiteth for thee, to be given thee as soon as thou shalt have answered my prayer; and the vow which I made to thee shall be performed.

In the verse of the text, is a prophecy of the glorious times of the gospel, when "all flesh shall come" to the true God, as

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to *the God who heareth prayer;* which is here mentioned as what distinguishes the true God from the gods to whom the nations prayed and sought, those gods who cannot hear, and cannot answer their prayer. The time was coming when all flesh should come to that God who *doth hear prayer*.

DOCTRINE.

It is the character of the Most High, that he is a God that hears prayer.

I shall handle this point in the following method.

1. Show that the Most High is a God that hears prayer.

2. That he is eminently such a God.

3. That he is so distinguishingly, or that herein he is distinguished from all false gods.

4. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

I. The Most High is a God that hears prayer. Though he is infinitely above all, and stands in no need of creatures; yet he is graciously pleased to take a merciful notice of poor worms of the dust. He manifests and presents himself as the object of prayer, appears as sitting on a mercy seat, that men may come to him by prayer. When they stand in need of any thing, he allows them to come to him, and ask it of him; and he is wont to hear their prayers. God in his word hath given many promises that he will hear their prayers; the scripture is full of examples of it; and God, in his dispensations towards his church, manifests himself to be a God that hears prayer.

Here it may be inquired, What is meant by God's hearing prayer? There are two things implied in it.

1. His accepting the supplications of those who pray to him. He accepts them when they come to him; their ad-

dress to him is well taken, he is well pleased with it. He approves of their coming to him, and approves of their asking such mercies as they request of him, and approves of their manner of doing it. He accepts of their prayers as an offering to him ; he accepts the honor they do him in prayer.

2. He acts agreeably to his acceptance ; and that two ways.

(1.) He sometimes manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by special discoveries of his mercy and sufficiency which he makes in prayer, or immediately after. God is sometimes pleased to manifest his acceptance of his people's prayers: He gives them special communion with him in prayer. While they are praying, he as it were comes to them, and discovers himself to them ; gives them sweet views of his glorious grace, purity, sufficiency, and sovereignty ; and enables them, with great quietness, to rest in him, and leave themselves and prayers with him, submitting to his will, and trusting in his grace and faithfulness. Such a manifestation God seems to have made of himself in prayer to HANNAH, which so quieted and composed her mind, and took away her sadness. We read in the first chap. of the first book of Samuel, how earnest she was, and how exercised in her mind, and that she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. But she came and poured out her soul before God, and spake out of the abundance of her complaint and grief; then we read, that she went away, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, verse 13, which seems to have been from some refreshing discoveries which God had made of himself to her, to enable her quietly to submit to his will, and trust in his mercy, whereby God manifested his acceptance of her.

Not that I conclude that persons can hence argue, that the particular thing which they ask will certainly be given them, or that they can particularly foretell from it what God will do in answer to their prayers, any farther than he has promised in his word ; yet God may, and doubtless does, thus testify his acceptance of their prayers, and from hence they may confidently rest in his providence, in his merciful ordering and disposing with respect to the thing which they ask.

(2.) God manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by answering them, by doing for them agreeably to their needs and supplications. He not only inwardly and spiritually discovers his mercy to their souls by his Spirit, but outwardly in his providence, by dealing mercifully with them in his providence, in consequence of their prayers, and by causing an agreeableness between his providence and their prayers.

I proceed now,

II. To show that it is eminently the character of the true God, that he is a God that hears prayer. This appears in several things.

1. In his giving such free access to him by prayer. God in his word manifests himself ready at all times to allow us to come to him. He sits on a throne of grace; and there is no vail to hide this throne, and keep us from it. The vail is rent from the top to the bottom; the way is open at all times, and we may go to God as often as we will. Although God be infinitely above us, yet we may come with boldness. Heb. iv. 14, 16. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." How wonderful is it that such worms as we should be allowed to come boldly at all times to so great a God!

Thus God indulges all kinds of persons, of all nations, Jews or Gentiles. 1 Cor. i. 2, 3. "Unto all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours; grace be unto you," &c. God allows such access to all of all ranks; none are so mean but that they may come boldly to God by prayer. Yea, God allows the most vile and unworthy; the greatest sinners are allowed to come through Christ. And God not only allows, but encourages, and frequently invites them; yea, God manifests himself as delighting in being sought to by prayer. Prov. xv. 8. "The prayer of the upright is his delight;" and in Cant. ii. 14, we have Christ saying to the spouse, "O my dove, let me hear thy

voice; for sweet is thy voice." The voice of the saints in prayer is sweet unto Christ; he delights to hear it.

The freeness of access by prayer that God allows them, appears wonderfully in his allowing them to be earnest and importunate; yea, to that degree as to take no denial, and as it were to give him no rest, and even encouraging them so to do. Isa. lxiii. 6, 7. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest." Thus Christ encourages us, as it were, to weary God out by prayer, in the parable of the importunate widow and the unjust judge, Luke xviii. at the beginning. So, in the parable of the man who went to his friend at midnight, to borrow three loaves, Luke xi. 5, &c.

Thus God allowed Jacob to wrestle with him, yea, to be resolute in it. God allows men to use, as it were, a violence and obstinacy, if I may so speak, this way; as in Jacob, who, when God said, "Let me go," said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." So it is spoken of with approbation, when men are violent for the kingdom of heaven, and take it by force. Thus Christ suffered the blind man to be most importunate and unceasing in his cries to him, Luke xviii. 38, 39. He continued crying, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Others who were present rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, looking upon it too great a boldness, and an indecent behavior towards Christ, for him thus to cry after him as he passed by. But Christ himself did not rebuke him, though he did not cease at the rebuke of the people, but cried so much the more. Christ was not offended at it, but stood and commanded him to be brought unto him, saying, "What wilt thou that I should do to thee?" And when the blind man had told him, Christ graciously granted his request.

The freedom of access that God gives in prayer, appears also in allowing us to come to him by prayer for every thing we need, both temporal and spiritual, whatever evil we need to be delivered from, or good we would obtain. Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and

supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

2. That God is eminently of this character, appears in his hearing prayer so readily. He often manifests his readiness to hear prayer, by giving an answer so speedily, sometimes while they are yet speaking, and sometimes before they pray, when they only have a design of praying So ready is God to hear prayer, that he takes notice of the first purpose of praying, and sometimes bestows mercy thereupon: Isa. lxv. 24. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." We read, that when Daniel was making humble and earnest supplication to God, God sent an angel to comfort him, and assure him of an answer, Dan. ix. 20....24.

And when God defers for the present to answer the prayer of faith, it is not from any backwardness in God to answer, but for the good of his people, sometimes that they may be better prepared for the mercy before they receive it, or because another time would be the best and fittest time on some other account. And even then, when God seems to delay an answer, the answer is indeed hastened, as in Luke xviii. 7, 8. "And shall not God avenge his own elect that cry unto him day and night, though he bear long with them? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily." Sometimes, when the blessing seems to tarry, God is even then at work to bring it about in the best time and best manner: Hab. ii. 3. "Though it tarry, wait for it; it will come, it will not tarry."

3. That the Most High is eminently one that hears prayer, appears by his giving so liberally in answer to prayer: James i. 5, 6. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." Men often show their backwardness and loathness to give to those who ask of them, both by the scantiness of their gifts, and by upbraiding those who ask of them. They will be sure to put them in mind of these and those faults, when they give them any thing; but, on the contrary, God both gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our undeservings, when he gives.

God is plenteous and rich in his communications to those who call upon him. Psal. lxxxvi. 5. "For thou art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee;" and Rom. x. 12. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

Sometimes God not only gives the thing asked, but he gives more than is asked. So he did to Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 12, 13. "Behold, I have done according to thy words: Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any rise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days." Yea, God will give more to his people than they can either ask or think, as is implied in that, Eph. iii. 20. "Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

4. That God is eminently of this character, appears by the greatness of the things which he hath often done in answer to prayer. Thus, when Esau was coming out against his brother Jacob, with four hundred men, without doubt fully resolved to cut him off, Jacob prayed to God, and God turned the heart of Esau, so that he met Jacob in a very friendly manner; as in Gen. xxxii. So in Egypt, at the prayer of Moses, God brought those dreadful plagues, and, at his prayer, removed them again. When Samson was ready to perish with thirst, he prayed to God, and God brought water out of a dry jaw bone, for his supply, Judg. xv. 18, 19. And when he prayed, after his strength was departed from him, God strengthened him, so as to pull down the temple of Dagon on the Philistines; so that those whom he slew at his death were more than all those whom he slew in his life.

Joshua prayed to God, and said to the sun, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon;" and God heard his prayer, and caused the sun and moon to stand still accordingly. The prophet "Elijah was a

man of like passions" with us; "and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit;" as the Apostle James observes, James v. 17, 18. So God confounded the army of Zerah, the Ethiopian, of a thousand thousand, in answer to the prayer of Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 9, &c. And God sent an angel, and slew in one night an hundred and eighty thousand men of Sennacharib's army, in answer to Hezekiah's prayer, 2 Kings xix. 14, 15, 16, 19.

5. This truth appears, in that God is, as it were, overcome by prayer. When God is displeased by sin, and manifests his displeasure, and comes out against us in his providence, and seems to oppose and resist us; in such cases, God is, speaking after the manner of men, overcome by humble and fervent prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," James v. 16. It has a great power in it. Such a prayer hearing God is the Most High, that he graciously manifests himself as conquered by it. Thus Jacob conquered in the wrestle which he had with God. God appeared to oppose Jacob in what he sought of him; he did, as it were, struggle against him, and to get away from him; yet Jacob was resolute, and overcame. Therefore God changed his name from Jacob to Israel; for, says he, "as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," Gen. xxxii. 28. A mighty prince indeed! to be great enough to overcome God: Hos. xii. 4. "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him"

So Moses, from time to time, did in this sense overcome God by prayer. When his anger was provoked against Israel, and he appeared to be ready to consume them in his hot displeasure, Moses stood in the gap, and by his humble and earnest prayer and supplication averted the stroke of divine vengeance. This appears by Exod. xxxii. 9, &c. and by Numb. xiv. 11, &c.

III. Herein the Most High God is distinguished from false gods. The true God is the only God of this character; there is no other of whom it may be said, that *he heareth prayer.* Those false gods are not gods that hear prayer, upon three accounts.

1. For want of a capacity to know what those who worship them pray for. Many of those things that are worshipped as gods in the world, are things without life; many are idols made by their worshippers; they are mere stocks and stones, that know nothing. They are indeed made with ears; but they hear not the prayers of them that cry to them, let them cry ever so loudly: They have eyes; but they see not, &c. Psal. cxv. 5....9.

Others, though they are not the work of men's hands, yet are things without life. Thus, many worship the sun, moon, and stars, which, though glorious creatures, yet are not capable of knowing any thing of the wants and desires of those who pray to them.

Others worship some certain kinds of brute animals, as the Egyptians were wont to worship bulls, which, though they be not without life, yet are destitute of that reason whereby they would be capable of knowing the requests of their worshippers. Others worship devils, instead of the true God: 1 Cor. x. 20. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils." These, though they are beings of great powers and understandings, and great subtlety, have not that knowledge which is necessary to capacitate them fully to understand the state, circumstances, necessities, and desires of those who pray to them. No devil is capable of a perfect understanding of the circumstances and need of any one person, much less of attending to, and being thoroughly acquainted with, all who pray to them through the world.

But the true God perfectly knows the circumstances of every one that prays to him throughout the world; he perfectly knows the needs and desires of every one. If there be millions praying to him at once, in different parts of the world,

it is no more difficult to him, who is infinite in knowledge, to take notice of all, and perfectly to be acquainted with every one, than of one alone. But it is not so with any other being but the Most High God.

God is so perfect in knowledge, that he doth not need to be informed by us, in order to a knowledge of our wants; for he knows what things we need before we ask him. The worshippers of false gods were wont to lift their voices and cry aloud, lest their gods should fail of hearing them, as Elijah tauntingly bid the worshippers of Baal do, 1 Kings xviii. 27. But the true God hears the silent petitions of his people. He needs not that we should cry aloud; yea, he knows and perfectly understands when we only pray in our hearts, as Hannah did, 1 Sam. i. 13.

2. False gods are not prayer hearing gods, for want of power to answer prayer. Idols are but vanities and lies; in them is no help. As to power or knowledge, they are nothing; as the apostle says, 1 Cor. viii. 4. "An idol is nothing in the world." As to the images that are the works of men's hands, they are so far from having any power to answer prayer, or to help them that pray to them, that they are not able at all to act: "They have hands, and handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat." They, therefore, that make them, and pray to them, are senseless and sottish, and make themselves stocks and stones, like unto them: Psal. cxv. 7, 8, and Jer. x. 5. "They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: They must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil; neither also is it in them to do good." As to the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, although mankind receive benefit by them, yet they act nothing voluntarily, but only by necessity of nature; therefore they have no power to do any thing in answer to prayers. And devils that are worshipped as gods, they are not able, if they had disposition, to make those happy who worship them, and can do nothing at all but only by divine permission, and as subject to the disposal of divine providence.

False gods can none of them save those that pray to them; and therefore, when the children of Israel departed from the true God to idols, and were distressed by their enemies, and cried to God in their distress, God reproved them for their folly in worshipping false gods, by bidding them go and cry to the gods whom they had served, and let them deliver them in the time of their tribulation, Josh. x. 14. So God challenges those gods themselves, in Isa. xli 23, 24. "Show us things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and behold it together. Behold ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: An abomination is he that chooseth you."

These false gods, instead of helping those who pray to them, cannot help themselves. The devils are miserable tormented spirits; they are bound in chains of darkness for their rebellion against the true God, and cannot deliver themselves.

3. False gods are not gods that hear prayer, for want of a disposition to help those who pray to them. As to those lifeless idols whom the Heathen worship, they are without both understanding and will. As to the devils, who in the dark places of the earth are worshipped as gods, they have no disposition to help those who cry to them; for they are cruel spirits; they are the mortal enemies of mankind, that thirst for their blood, and delight in nothing but their misery. They have no more disposition to help mankind, than a parcel of hungry wolves or lions would have to protect and help a flock of lambs. And those that worship and pray to them get not their good will by serving them: All the reward that Satan will give them, for the service which they do him, is to make a prey of them, and devour them.

I proceed now,

IV. To give the reasons of the doctrine; which I would do in answer to these two inquiries: 1. Why God requires

prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies on men? 2. Why God is so ready to hear the prayers of men?

INQUIRY 1. Why doth God require prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies? To this I shall answer both negatively and affirmatively.

(1.) Negatively. 1. It is not in order that God may be informed of our wants or desires. God is omniscient, and with respect to his knowledge, unchangeable; his knowledge cannot be added to. God never is informed of any thing, nor gains any knowledge by information. He knows what we want a thousand times more perfectly than we do ourselves. He knows what things we have need of before we ask him; he knows our desires before we declare them by prayer.

2. Nor is it to dispose and incline God to show mercy: For though, in speaking after the manner of men, God is sometimes in scripture represented as though he were moved and persuaded by the prayers and cries of his people; yet it is not to be thought that God is properly moved or made willing by our prayers; for it is no more possible that there should be any new inclination or will in God, than new knowledge. The mercy of God is not moved or drawn by any thing in the creature; but the spring of God's beneficence is within himself only; he is self moved; and whatsoever mercy he bestows, the reason and ground of it is not to be sought for in the creature, but in God's own good pleasure. It is the will of God to bestow mercy in this way, viz. in answer to prayer, when he designs beforehand to bestow mercy, yea, when he has promised it; as Ezek. xxxvi. 36, 37. "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be an antecedent to the bestowment of mercy; and he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer.

Yet God is not in fact prevailed on or made willing by prayer. But when he shows mercy in answer to prayer, his

intention of mercy is not the effect of the prayer; but that the people of God are stirred up to prayer, is the effect of God's intention to show mercy. Because God intends to show mercy, therefore he pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.

(2.) Affirmatively. There may be two reasons given why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercy; one especially respects God, and the other respects ourselves.

1. With respect to God, prayer is but a sensible acknowledgment of our dependence on God, to his glory. As God hath made all things for his own glory, so he will be glorified and acknowledged by his creatures; and it is fit that he should require this of those who would be the subjects of his mercy. That we, when we stand in need of any mercy of God, or desire to receive any mercy from him, should go to God, and humbly supplicate the divine Being for the bestowment of that mercy, is but a suitable acknowledgment of our dependence on the power and mercy of God for that which we need, and but a suitable honor paid to the great Author and Fountain of all good.

2. With respect to ourselves, God requires prayer of us in order to the bestowment of mercy, because it tends to prepare us for the receipt of mercy. Fervent prayer many ways tends to prepare the heart for the receipt of the mercy prayed for. Hereby is excited a sense of our need of the mercy, and of the value of the mercy which we seek, and at the same time are excited earnest desires of it; whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, and rejoice in it when bestowed, and to be thankful for it. Prayer, with that confession which should be in prayer, may be the occasion of a sense of our unworthiness of the mercy we seek; and the placing of ourselves in the immediate presence of God may make us sensible of his majesty, and we may be humbled before him, and be fitted to receive mercy of him. Our prayer to God may excite in us a suitable sense and consideration of our dependence on God for the mercy we ask, and a suitable exercise of

faith in God's sufficiency, that so we may be prepared to glorify his name when the mercy is received.

Inquiry 2. Why is God so ready to hear the prayers of men? To this I answer.

1. Because God is a God of infinite grace and mercy. It is indeed a very wonderful thing, that so great a God should be so ready to hear our prayers, though we are so despicable and unworthy; that he should give free access at all times to every one; should allow us to be as importunate as we will, without esteeming it any indecent boldness; should hear all sincere prayers put up to him; should be so ready to hear, and so rich in mercy to them that call upon him; that worms of the dust should have such power with God by prayer; that God should do such great things in answer to their prayers, and should show himself, as it were, overcome by them. This is very wonderful, when we consider the distance between God and us, and consider how we have provoked God by our sins, and how unworthy we are of the least gracious notice.

And it can be resolved into nothing else but infinite mercy and grace. It cannot be from any need that God stands in of us; for our goodness extendeth not to him. Neither can it be from any thing in us to incline the heart of God to us: It cannot be from any worthiness in our prayers, which are in themselves very miserable polluted things. But it is because God delights in mercy and condescention. He is herein infinitely distinguished from all other gods: He is the great fountain of all good, from whom goodness flows as light from the sun.

2. We have a glorious Mediator, who has prepared the way, that our prayers may be heard consistently with the honor of God's justice and Majesty. Not only has God in himself mercy sufficient for this, but the Mediator has provided that this mercy may be exercised consistently with the honor of God. Through him we may come to God, and God may show mercy to us: He is the way, the truth, and the life; no man can come to the Father but by him. This Mediator

hath done three things to make way for the hearing of our prayers.

(1.) He hath by his blood made atonement for sin, so that our guilt need not stand in the way, as a separation wall between God and us, and that our sins might not be a cloud through which our prayers cannot pass; and by his atonement he hath made the way to the throne of grace open. God would have been infinitely gracious if there had been no Mediator; but the way to the mercy seat would have been blocked up. But Christ hath removed whatever stood in the way. The vail which was before the mercyseat "is rent from the top to the bottom," by the death of Christ. If it had not been for the death of Christ, our guilt would have remained as a wall of brass, to hinder our approach. But all is removed by his blood, Heb. x. 17, &c.

(2.) Christ has, by his obedience, purchased that the prayers of those who believe in him should be heard. He has not only removed the obstacles to our prayers, but has merited a hearing of them. His merits are the incense that is offered with the prayers of the saints, which renders them a sweet savor to God, and acceptable in his sight. Hence the prayers of the saints have such power with God; hence the prayer of a poor worm of the dust had such power with God, that in answer God stopped the sun in his course for about the space of a whole day; hence such unworthy creatures as we are able to overcome God; hence Jacob as a prince had power with God, and prevailed. Our prayers would be of no account, and of no avail with God, were it not for the merits of Christ; for in themselves they are miserable worthless things, and might justly be odious and abominable to God.

(3.) Christ enforces the prayers of his people, by his intercession at the right hand of God in heaven. He hath entered for us into the holy of holies, with the incense which he hath provided, and there he makes continual intercession for all that come to God in his name; so that their prayers come to God the Father through his hands, if I may so say; which is represented in Rev. viii. 3. 4. "And another angel came and stood

at the altar, having a golden censor; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand."

This was typified of old by the priest's offering incense in the temple, at the time when the multitude of the people were offering up their prayers to God; as Luke i. 10. "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without, at the time of incense."

APPLICATION.

I. Hence we may learn, how highly we are privileged, in that we have the Most High God revealed to us, who is a God that heareth prayer. The greater part of mankind are destitute of this privilege; they are ignorant of this God; the gods whom they worship are not prayer hearing gods. Whatever their necessities are, whatever calamities or sorrows they are the subjects of, if they meet with grievous and heavy afflictions, wherein they cannot help themselves, and man is unable to help them, they have no prayer hearing God to whom they may go. If they go to the gods whom they worship, and cry to them ever so earnestly, it will be in vain. They worship either lifeless things, that can neither help them, nor know that they need help; or wicked cruel spirits, who are their enemies, and wish nothing but their misery, and who, instead of helping them, are from day to day working their ruin, and watching over them, as an hungry lion watches over his prey.

How are we distinguished from them, in that we have the true God made known to us; a God of infinite grace and mercy; a God full of compassion to the miserable, who is ready to pity us under all our troubles and sorrows, to hear our cries, and give us all that relief which we need; a God who delights in mercy, and is rich to all that call upon him! How highly privileged are we, in that we have the holy word of

this same God, to direct us how to come to him, and seek mercy of him! And whatever difficulties or distress we are in, we may go with confidence and great encouragement to him with all our difficulties and complaints. What a comfort may this be to us! And what reason have we to rejoice in our own privileges, highly to prize them, and to bless God that he hath been so merciful to us, as to give us his word, and reveal himself to us; and that he hath not left us to cry for help to stocks, and stones, and devils, as he has left many thousands of others!

Objection. I have often prayed to God for these and those mercies, and God has not heard my prayers.

To this I shall answer several things.

(1.) It is no argument, that God is not a prayer hearing God, if he give not to men what they ask of him, to consume upon their lusts. Oftentimes, when men pray for these and those temporal good things, they desire them chiefly to gratify their lusts. They desire them for no good end, but only to gratify their pride or sensuality. They pray for worldly good things chiefly from a worldly spirit: It is because they make too much of an idol of the world; and if so, it is no wonder that God doth not hear their prayers: James iv 3. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts."

It is no argument that God is not a prayer hearing God, that he will not grant your request, when you ask him to give you something of which you will make an idol, and set it up in opposition to him; or that he will not hear you, when you ask of him these and those things to use as weapons of warfare against him, or as instruments to serve his enemies. No wonder that God will not hear you, when you pray for silver, or gold, or wool, or flax, to offer them to Baal. If God should hear such prayers, he would act as his own enemy, in as much as he would bestow on his enemies the things which they desire out of enmity against him, and to use against him as his enemies, and to serve his enemies.

(2.) It is no argument that God is not a prayer hearing God, that he heareth not *insincere* and *unbelieving* prayers. How can we expect that God should have any respect to that which has no sincerity in it? God looketh not at words, but at the heart; and it is fit that he should do so. If men's prayers be not hearty, if they pray only in words, and not in heart, what are their prayers good for? And why should that God who searches the heart and tries the reins have any respect to them?

Sometimes men do nothing but dissemble in their prayers; and when they do so, it is no argument that God is ever the less a prayer hearing God, that he doth not hear such prayers; for it is no argument of want of mercy. Sometimes men pray for that in words which they really desire not in their hearts. Sometimes men pray to God that he would purge them from sin, when at the same time they show by their practice that they do not desire to be purged from sin, but love sin, and choose it, and are utterly averse to parting with it. So they will pray for other spiritual blessings, of which they have no real desire. In like manner they often dissemble in the pretence and show, which they make in their prayers, of a dependence on God for mercies, and of a sense of his sufficiency to supply them. In our coming to God, and praying to him for such and such things, there is a show that we are sensible that we are dependent on him for them, and that he is sufficient to give them to us. But men sometimes seem to pray, who are not sensible of their dependence on God, nor do they think him to be sufficient to supply them. For some things that they go to God for, they all the while trust in themselves; and for other things they have no confidence in God.

Another way in which men often dissemble is, in seeming to pray and to be supplicants in words, when in heart they pray not, but challenge and demand. They show in words as though they were beggars; but in heart they come as creditors, and look on God as their debtor. In words they seem to ask these and those things as the fruit of free grace; but in heart they account it would be hard, unjust, and cruel, if

God should deny them. In words they seem humble and submissive, but in heart they are proud and contentious; there is no prayer but in their words.

It doth not render God at all the less a prayer hearing God, that he distinguishes, as an all seeing God, between real prayers and pretended ones. Such prayers as those which I have just now been mentioning, are not worthy of the name of prayers; and they are so accounted in the eyes of him who searches the heart, and sees things as they are. Nor would men account such things to be prayers, any more than the talk of a parrot, that knows not what it says, were it not that they judge by the outward appearance.

All prayer that is not the prayer OF FAITH, is insincere; for prayer is a show or manifestation of dependence on God, and trust in his sufficiency and mercy. Therefore, where this trust or FAITH is wanting, there is no prayer in the sight of God. And however God is sometimes pleased to grant the requests of those who have no FAITH, yet he has not obliged himself so to do; nor is it an argument of his not being a prayer hearing God, when he hears them not.

(3.) It is no argument that God is not a prayer hearing God, that he exercises his own wisdom as to the time and manner of answering prayers. Some of God's people are sometimes ready to think, that God doth not hear their prayers, because he doth not answer them at the times when they expected; when indeed God doth hear them and will answer them, in the time and way to which his own wisdom directs.

The business of prayer is not to direct God, who is infinitely wise, and needs not any of our directions, who knows what is best for us ten thousand times better than we, and knows what time and what way are best. It is fit that God should answer prayer, as an infinitely wise God, in the exercise of his own wisdom, and not ours. God will deal as a father with us, in answering our requests. But a child is not to expect that the father's wisdom will be subject to his; nor ought he to desire it, but should esteem it a privilege, that the parent who takes care of him, and provides for him, is wiser than he, and will provide for him according to his own wisdom.

As to particular temporal blessings for which we pray, it is no argument that God is not a prayer hearing God, that he bestows them not upon us; for it may be that God sees the things for which we pray not to be best for us. If so, it would be no mercy in him to bestow them upon us, but a judgment. Such things, therefore, ought always to be asked with submission to the divine will.

But God can answer prayer, though he bestow not the very thing for which we pray. He can sometimes better answer the lawful desires and good end we have in prayer another way. If our end be our own good and happiness, God can perhaps better answer that end in bestowing something else than in the bestowment of that very thing which we ask. And if the main good we aim at in our prayer be attained, our prayer is answered, though not in the bestowment of the individual thing which we ask: And so that may still be true which was asserted in the doctrinal part, viz. *that God always hears the prayer* OF FAITH. God never once failed of hearing a *sincere* and *believing* prayer; and those promises for ever hold good, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

2. The *second use* may be, of reproof to those that neglect the duty of prayer. If we enjoy so great a privilege as to have the true God, who is a prayer hearing God, revealed to us, how great will be our folly and inexcusableness, if we neglect the privilege, make no use of it, and deprive ourselves of the advantage of it, by not seeking this God by prayer. They are hereby reproved who neglect the great duty of secret prayer, which is more expressly required in the word of God than any other kind of prayer. What account can those persons give of themselves, who neglect so known a duty? It is impossible that any among us should be ignorant of this command of God. How daring, therefore, is their wickedness, who live in the neglect of this duty, if any such there be among us! And what can they answer to their Judge, when he shall call them to an account for it?

Here I shall briefly say something to an EXCUSE which some may be ready to make for themselves. Some may be ready to say, *If I do pray, my prayer will not be the prayer of faith, because I am in a natural condition, and have no faith.*

ANSWER 1. This excuses not from obedience to a plain command of God. The command is to all to whom the command shall come. God not only directs godly persons to pray, but others also. In the beginning of the second chapter of Proverbs, God directs all persons to cry after wisdom, and to lift up their voices for understanding, in order to their obtaining the fear and knowledge of God; and in James i. 5. the apostle says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God;" and Peter directed *Simon Magus* to repent and pray God, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him, Acts viii. 22. Therefore, when God says, do thus or thus, it is not for us to make excuses, but we must do the thing required.

ANSWER 2. God is pleased sometimes to answer the prayers of unbelievers. Indeed he hears not their prayers from any goodness or acceptableness that there is in their prayers, or because of any true respect to him manifested in them, for there is none; nor has he obliged himself to answer such prayers; yet he is pleased sometimes, of his sovereign mercy, to pity wicked men, and hear their cries. Thus he heard the cries of the Ninevites, Jonah chap. iii. So he heard the prayer of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27, 28.

Though there be no regard to God in their prayers, yet God, of his infinite grace, is pleased to have respect to their desires of their own happiness, and to grant their requests. God may, and sometimes does, hear the cries of wicked men, as he hears the hungry ravens, when they cry, Psalm cxlvii. 9. and as he opens his bountiful hand, and satisfies the desires of every living thing, Psalm cxlv. 16. Besides, the prayers of sinners, though they have no goodness in them, yet are made a means of a preparation for mercy.

3. The *last use* shall be of exhortation. Seeing we have such a prayer hearing God as we have heard, let us be much

employed in the duty of prayer: Let us pray with all prayer and supplication: Let us live prayerful lives, continuing instant in prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance; praying without ceasing, praying always, and not fainting; and not praying in a dull, cold, and lifeless manner, but *wrestling* with God in prayer. I shall particularly at this time exhort to two things.

(1.) Let us pray for others, as well as for ourselves. God hath in his word manifested himself to be especially well pleased with hearty intercessory prayers, or prayers for our fellow creatures: 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for *all men*; for kings, &c.; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." It is especially acceptable to God, as such prayers, when sincere, are an expression of a spirit of Christian charity, which is a grace peculiarly becoming Christians, and acceptable to God, as may be seen by what is said of it in 1 Cor. xiii.

(2.) Let us especially be earnest with God in our prayers, for the outpouring of his Spirit both on ourselves and others. We have not such encouragement in scripture to pray for any other blessing, as we have to pray for this blessing. It is the greatest of all mercies; yet God hath given such encouragement to pray for no other mercy, as he hath for this mercy. See Luke xi. 13. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father *give the Holy Spirit* to them that ask him?" Though it be the greatest mercy, yet God is most ready to bestow it of any whatsoever. We ought therefore most earnestly to pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit on our own souls, on others in whom we are particularly concerned, on the people among whom we dwell, and on the whole land and whole earth. We are directed to pray for this with the greatest possible importunity in the forementioned place, Isaiah lxii. 6, 7. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

SERMON XIX.*

Great Care necessary, lest we live in some way of Sin.

PSALM cxxxix. 23, 24.

SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART; TRY ME AND KNOW MY THOUGHTS; AND SEE IF THERE BE ANY WICKED WAY IN ME, AND LEAD ME IN THE WAY EVERLASTING.

THIS psalm is a meditation on the omniscience of God, or upon his perfect view and knowledge of every thing, which the Psalmist represents by that perfect knowledge which God had of all his actions, his downsitting and his uprising; and of his thoughts, so that he knew his thoughts afar off; and of his words, "There is not a word in my tongue," says the Psalmist, "but thou knowest it altogether." Then he represents it by the impossibility of fleeing from the divine presence, or of hiding from him; so that if he should go into heaven, or hide himself in hell, or fly to the uttermost parts of the sea; yet he would not be hid from God: Or if he should endeavor to hide himself in darkness, yet that would not cover him; but the darkness and light are both alike to him.

Then he represents it by the knowledge which God had of him while in his mother's womb, verses 15, 16. "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret;

* Dated September 1733.

thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written."

After this the Psalmist observes what must be inferred as a necessary consequence of this omniscience of God, viz. that he will slay the wicked, since he seeth all their wickedness, and nothing of it is hid from him. And last of all, the Psalmist improves this meditation upon God's allseeing eye, in begging of God that he would search and try him, to see if there were any wicked way in him, and lead him in the way everlasting.

Three things may be noted in the words.

1. The act of mercy which the Psalmist implores of God towards himself, viz. that God would search him, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts."

2. In what respect he desires to be searched, viz. "to see if there were any wicked way in him." We are not to understand by it, that the Psalmist means that God should search him for his own information. What he had said before, of God's knowing all things, implies that he hath no need of that. The Psalmist had said, in the second verse, that God understood his thought afar off; i. e. it was all plain before him, he saw it without difficulty, or without being forced to come nigh, and diligently to observe. That which is plain to be seen, may be seen at a distance.

Therefore, when the Psalmist prays that God would search him, to see if there were any wicked way in him, he cannot mean that he should search that he himself might see or be informed, but that the PSALMIST might see and be informed. He prays that God would search him by his discovering light; that he would lead him thoroughly to discern himself, and see whether there were any wicked way in him. Such figurative expressions are often used in scripture. The word of God is said to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Not that the word itself discerns, but it searches and opens our hearts to view; so that it enables us to discern the tem-

per and desires of our hearts. So God is often said to TRY men. He doth not try them for his own information, but for the discovery and manifestation of them to themselves or others.

3. Observe to what end he thus desires God to search him, viz. "That he might be led in the way everlasting;" i. e. not only in a way which may have a specious show, and appear right to him for a while, and in which he may have peace and quietness for the present; but in the way which will hold, which will stand the test, which he may confidently abide by for ever, and always approve of as good and right, and in which he may always have peace and joy. It is said, that "the way of the ungodly shall perish," Psalm i. 6. In opposition to this, the way of the righteous is in the text said TO LAST FOR EVER.

DOCTRINE.

All men should be much concerned to know, whether they do not live in some way of sin.

David was much concerned to know this concerning himself: He searched himself, he examined his own heart and ways; but he did not trust to that; he was still afraid lest there might be some wicked way in him which had escaped his notice: Therefore he cries to God to search him. And his earnestness appears in the frequent repetition of the same request in different words: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.* He was very earnest to know whether there were not some evil way or other in him, in which he went on, and did not take notice of it.

1. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in a STATE OF SIN. All unregenerate men live in sin. We are born under the power and dominion of sin, are sold under sin; every unconverted sinner is a devoted servant to sin and Satan. We should look upon it as of the greatest importance to us, to know in what state we are, whether we ever had any change made in our hearts from sin to holiness, or whether we be not still in the gall of bitterness and

bond of iniquity; whether ever sin were truly mortified in us; whether we do not live in the sin of unbelief, and in the rejection of the Saviour. This is what the apostle insists upon with the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Those who entertain the opinion and hope of themselves, that they are godly, should take great care to see that their foundation be right. Those that are in doubt should not give themselves rest till the matter be resolved.

Every unconverted person lives in a *sinful way*. He not only lives in a particular evil practice, but the whole course of his life is sinful. The imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. He not only doth evil, but he doth no good, Psal. xiv. 3. "They are altogether become filthy: There is none that doeth good, no not one." Sin is an unconverted man's trade; it is the work and business of his life; for he is the servant of sin. And ordinarily hypocrites, or those who are wicked men, and yet think themselves godly, and make a profession accordingly, are especially odious and abominable to God.

2. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some particular way which is offensive and displeasing to God: This is what I principally intend in the doctrine. We ought to be much concerned to know whether we do not live in the gratification of some lust, either in practice or in our thoughts; whether we do not live in the omission of some duty, some thing which God expects we should do; whether we do not go into some practice or manner of behaviour, which is not warrantable. We should inquire whether we do not live in some practice which is against our light, and whether we do not allow ourselves in known sins.

We should be strict to inquire whether or no we have not hitherto allowed ourselves in some or other sinful way, through wrong principles and mistaken notions of our duty: Whether we have not lived in the practice of some things offensive

to God, through want of care, and watchfulness, and observation of ourselves. We should be concerned to know whether we live not in some way which doth not become the profession we make; and whether our practice in some things be not unbecoming Christians, contrary to Christian rules, not suitable for the disciples and followers of the Holy Jesus, the Lamb of God. We ought to be concerned to know this, because,

(1.) God requires of us, that we exercise the utmost watchfulness and diligence in his service. Reason teaches, that it is our duty to exercise the utmost care, that we may know the mind and will of God, and our duty in all the branches of it, and to use our utmost diligence in every thing to do it; because the service of God is the great business of our lives, it is that work which is the end of our being; and God is worthy, that we should serve him to the utmost of our power in all things. This is what God often expressly requires of us; Deut. iv. 9. "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things that thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life." And v. 15, 16. Take ye therefore good heed to yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves." And Deut. vi. 17. "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes which he hath commanded thee." And Prov. iv. 23. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

So we are commanded by Christ to *watch and pray*; Matth. xxvi. 41, and Luke xxi. 34, 36. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life." Eph. v. 15. "See that ye walk circumspectly."

So that if we be found in any evil way whatsoever, it will not excuse us, that it was through inadvertence, or that we were not aware of it; as long as it is through want of that care and watchfulness in us, which we ought to have maintained.

(2.) If we live in any way of sin, we live in a way whereby God is dishonored; but the honor of God ought to be su-

premely regarded by all. If every one would make it his great care in all things to obey God, to live justly and holily, to walk in every thing according to Christian rules; and would maintain a strict, watchful, and scrutinous eye over himself, to see if there were no wicked way in him; would give diligence to amend whatsoever is amiss; would avoid every unholy, unchristian, and sinful way; and if the practice of all were universally as becometh Christians, how greatly would this be to the glory of God, and of Jesus Christ! How greatly would it be to the credit and honor of religion! How would it tend to excite an high esteem of religion in spectators, and to recommend an holy life! How would it stop the mouths of objectors and opposers! How beautiful and amiable would religion then appear, when exemplified and holden forth in the lives of Christians, not maimed and mutilated, but whole and entire, as it were in its true shape, having all its parts and its proper beauty! Religion would then appear to be an amiable thing indeed.

If those who call themselves Christians generally, thus walked in all the paths of virtue and holiness, it would tend more to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world, the conviction of sinners, and the propagation of religion among unbelievers, than all the sermons in the world, so long as the lives of those who are called Christians are as they are now.

For want of this concern and watchfulness in the degree in which it ought to take place, many truly godly persons adorn not their profession as they ought to do, and, on the contrary, in some things dishonor it. For want of being so much concerned as they ought to be, to know whether they do not walk in some way that is unbecoming a Christian, and offensive to God; their behavior in some things is very unlovely, and such as is an offence and stumbling block to others, and gives occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

(3) We should be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, as we would regard our own interest. If we live in any way of sin, it will be exceedingly

to our hurt. Sin, as it is the most hateful evil, it is that which is most prejudicial to our interest, and tends most to our hurt of any thing in the world. If we live in any way that is displeasing to God, it may be the ruin of our souls. Though men reform all other wicked practices, yet if they live in but one sinful way, which they do not forsake, it may prove their everlasting undoing.

If we live in any way of sin, we shall thereby provoke God to anger, and bring guilt upon our own souls. Neither will it excuse us, that we were not sensible how evil that way was in which we walked; that we did not consider it; that we were blind as to any evil in it. We contract guilt not only by living in those ways which we know, but in those which we might know to be sinful, if we were but sufficiently concerned to know what is sinful and what not, and to examine ourselves, and search our own hearts and ways. If we walk in some evil way, and know it not for want of watchfulness and consideration, that will not excuse us; for we ought to have watched and considered, and made the most diligent inquiry.

If we walk in some evil way, it will be a great prejudice to us in this world. We shall thereby be deprived of that comfort which we otherwise might enjoy, and shall expose ourselves to a great deal of soul trouble, and sorrow, and darkness, which otherwise we might have been free from. A wicked way is the original way of pain or grief. In it we shall expose ourselves to the judgments of God, even in this world; and we shall be great losers by it, in respect to our eternal interest; and that though we may not live in a way of sin wilfully, and with a deliberate resolution, but carelessly, and through the deceitfulness of our corruptions. However we shall offend God, and prevent the flourishing of grace in our hearts, if not the very being of it.

Many are very careful that they do not proceed in mistakes, where their temporal interest is concerned. They will be strictly careful that they be not led on blindfold in the bargains which they make; in their traffic one with another, they are careful to have their eyes about them, and to see that they

go safely in these cases; and why not, where the interest of their souls is concerned?

(4.) We should be much concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin, because we are exceedingly prone to walk in some such way. The heart of man is naturally prone to sin; the weight of the soul is naturally that way, as the stone by its weight tendeth downwards. And there is very much of a remaining proneness to sin in the saints. Though sin be mortified in them, yet there is a body of sin and death remaining; there are all manner of lusts and corrupt inclinations. We are exceeding apt to get into some ill path or other. Man is so prone to sinful ways, that without maintaining a constant, strict watch over himself, no other can be expected than that he will walk in some way of sin.

Our hearts are so full of sin, that they are ready to betray us. That to which men are prone, they are apt to get into before they are aware. Sin is apt to steal in upon us unawares. Besides this, we live in a world where we continually meet with temptations; we walk in the midst of snares; and the devil, a subtle adversary, is continually watching over us, endeavoring, by all manner of wiles and devices, to lead us astray into bye paths. 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. "I am jealous over you. I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety; so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 1 Pet. v. 8. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."... These things should make us the more jealous of ourselves.

(5.) We ought to be concerned to know whether we do not live in some way of sin; because there are many who live in such ways, and do not consider it, or are not sensible of it. It is a thing of great importance that we should know it, and yet the knowledge is not to be acquired without difficulty. Many live in ways which are offensive to God, who are not sensible of it. They are strangely blinded in this case. Psal. xix. 12. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me

from secret faults." By secret faults, the Psalmist means those which are secret to himself, those sins which were in him, or which he was guilty of, and yet was not aware of.

That the knowing whether we do not live in some way of sin is attended with difficulty, is not because the rules of judging in such a case are not plain or plentiful. God hath abundantly taught us what we ought, and what we ought not to do; and the rules by which we are to walk are often set before us in the preaching of the word. So that the difficulty of knowing whether there be any wicked way in us, is not for want of external light, or for want of God's having told us plainly and abundantly what are wicked ways. But that many persons live in ways which are displeasing to God, and yet are not sensible of it, may arise from the following things.

1. From the blinding, deceitful nature of sin. The heart of man is full of sin and corruption, and that corruption is of an exceeding darkening, blinding nature. Sin always carries a degree of darkness with it; and the more it prevails, the more it darkens and deludes the mind. It is from hence that the knowing whether there be any wicked way in us, is a difficult thing. The difficulty is not at all for want of light without us, not at all because the word of God is not plain, or the rules not clear; but it is because of the darkness within us. The light shines clear enough around us, but the fault is in our eyes; they are dim, are darkened and blinded by a pernicious distemper.

Sin is of a deceitful nature, because, so far as it prevails, so far it gains the inclination and will, and that sways and biasses the judgment. So far as any lust prevails, so far it biasses the mind to approve of it. So far as any sin sways the inclination or will, so far that sin seems pleasing and good to the man: And that which is pleasing, the mind is prejudiced to think is right. Hence when any lust hath so gained upon a man, as to get him into a sinful way or practice; it having gained his will, also prejudices his understanding. And the more irregularly a man walks, the more will his mind proba-

bly be darkened and blinded; because by so much the more doth sin prevail.

Hence many men who live in ways which are not agreeable to the rules of God's word, yet are not sensible of it; and it is a difficult thing to make them sensible of it; because the same lust that leads them into that evil way, blinds them in it. Thus, if a man live in a way of malice or envy, the more malice or envy prevails, the more will it blind his understanding to approve of it. The more a man hates his neighbor, the more will he be disposed to think that he has just cause to hate him, and that his neighbor is hateful, and deserves to be hated, and that it is not his duty to love him. So if a man live in any way of lasciviousness, the more his impure lust prevails, the more sweet and pleasant will it make the sin appear, and so the more will he be disposed and prejudiced to think there is no evil in it.

So the more a man lives in a way of covetousness, or the more inordinately he desires the profits of the world, the more will he think himself excusable in so doing, and the more will he think that he has a necessity of those things, and cannot do without them. And if they be necessary, then he is excusable for eagerly desiring them. The same might be shown of all the lusts which are in men's hearts. By how much the more they prevail, by so much the more do they blind the mind, and dispose the judgment to approve of them. All lusts are deceitful lusts. Eph. iv. 22. "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the *deceitful lusts*." And even godly men may for a time be blinded and deluded by a lust, so far as to live in a way which is displeasing to God."

The lusts of men's hearts, prejudicing them in favor of sinful practices, to which those lusts tend, and in which they delight; this stirs up carnal reason, and puts men, with all the subtlety of which they are capable, to invent pleas and arguments to justify such practices. When men are very strongly inclined and tempted to any wicked practice, and conscience troubles them about it, they will rack their brains

to find out arguments to stop the mouth of conscience, and to make themselves believe that they may lawfully proceed in that practice.

When men have entered upon an ill practice, and proceeded in it, then their selflove prejudices them to approve of it. Men do not love to condemn themselves; they are prone to flatter themselves, and are prejudiced in their own favor, and in favor of whatever is found in themselves. Hence they will find out good names, by which to call their evil dispositions and practices; they will make them virtuous, or at least will make them innocent. Their covetousness they will call prudence and diligence in business. If they rejoice at another's calamity, they pretend it is because they hope it will do him good, and will humble him. If they indulge in excessive drinking, it is because their constitutions require it. If they talk against, and backbite their neighbor, they call it zeal against sin; it is because they would bear a testimony against such wickedness. If they set up their wills to oppose others in public affairs, then they call their wilfulness conscience, or respect to the public good. Thus they find good names for all their evil ways.

Men are very apt to bring their principles to their practices, and not their practices to their principles, as they ought to do. They, in their practice, comply not with their consciences; but all their strife is to bring their consciences to comply with their practice.

On the account of this deceitfulness of sin, and because we have so much sin dwelling in our hearts, it is a difficult thing to pass a true judgment on our own ways and practices. On this account we should make diligent search, and be much concerned to know whether there be not some wicked way in us. Heb. iii. 12, 13. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Men can more easily see faults in others than they can in themselves. When they see others out of the way, they will presently condemn them, when perhaps they do, or have done the same, or the like themselves, and in themselves justify it. Men can discern motes in others' eyes, better than they can beams in their own. Prov. xxi. 2. "Every way of man is right in his own eyes." The heart in this matter is exceedingly deceitful. Jer. xvii. 9. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?" We ought not therefore to trust in our own hearts in this matter, but to keep a jealous eye on ourselves, to be prying into our own hearts and ways, and to cry to God that he would search us. Prov. xxviii. 26. "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool."

2. Satan also sets in with our deceitful lusts, and labors to blind us in this matter. He is continually endeavoring to lead us into sinful ways, and sets in with carnal reason to flatter us in such ways, and to blind the conscience. He is the prince of darkness; he labors to blind and deceive; it hath been his work ever since he began it with our first parents.

3. Sometimes men are not sensible, because they are stupified through custom. Custom in an evil practice stupifies the mind, so that it makes any way of sin, which at first was offensive to conscience, after a while, to seem harmless.

4. Sometimes persons live in ways of sin, and are not sensible of it, because they are blinded by common custom, and the examples of others. There are so many who go into the practice, and it is so common a custom, that it is esteemed little or no discredit to a man; it is little testified against. This causes some things to appear innocent, which are very displeasing to God, and abominable in his sight. Perhaps we see them practised by those of whom we have an high esteem, by our superiors, and those who are accounted wise men. This greatly prepossesses the mind in favor of them, and takes off the sense of their evil. Or if they be observed to be commonly practised by those who are accounted godly men, men of experience in religion, this tends greatly to

harden the heart, and blind the mind with respect to any evil practice.

5. Persons are in great danger of living in ways of sin, and not being sensible of it, for want of duly regarding and considering their duty in the full extent of it. There are some who hear of the necessity of reforming from all sins, and attending all duties, and will set themselves to perform some particular duties, at the same time neglecting others. Perhaps their thoughts will be wholly taken up about religious duties, such as prayer in secret, reading the scriptures, and other good books, going to public worship and giving diligent attention, keeping the sabbath, and serious meditation. They seem to regard these things, as though they comprised their duty in its full extent, and as if this were their whole work; and moral duties towards their neighbors, their duties in the relations in which they stand, their duties as husbands or wives, as brethren or sisters, or their duties as neighbors, seem not to be considered by them.

They consider not the necessity of those things: And when they hear of earnestly seeking salvation in a way of diligent attendance on all duties, they seem to leave those out of their thoughts, as if they were not meant; nor any other duties, except reading, and praying, and keeping the sabbath, and the like. Or if they do regard some parts of their moral duty, it may be other branches of it are not considered. Thus if they be just in their dealings, yet perhaps they neglect deeds of charity. They know they must not defraud their neighbor; they must not lie; they must not commit uncleanness; but seem not to consider what an evil it is to talk against others lightly, or to take up a reproach against them, or to contend and quarrel with them, or to live contrary to the rules of the gospel in their family relations, or not to instruct their children or servants.

Many men seem to be very conscientious in some things, in some branches of their duty on which they keep their eye, when other important branches are entirely neglected, and

seem not to be noticed by them. They regard not their duty in the full extent of it.

APPLICATION.

The use I shall make of this doctrine is, to stir up in you the concern of which I have been speaking, and to lead you to a strict inquiry, whether you do not live in some way of sin.

1. I shall propose some directions for you to follow, that you may discover whether you do not live in some way of sin.

2. I shall mention some particulars, concerning which you may examine yourselves, in order to know whether you do not live in some way of sin.

3. I shall mention some things which show the importance of knowing and forsaking the ways of sin in which you live.

I. I shall show what method you ought to take, in order to find out whether you do not live in some way of sin. This, as hath been observed, is a difficult thing to be known; but it is not a matter of so much difficulty, but that if persons were sufficiently concerned about it, and strict and thorough in inquiring and searching, it might, for the most part, be discovered; men might know whether they live in any way of sin, or not. Persons who are deeply concerned to please and obey God, need not, under the light we enjoy, go on in ways of sin, through ignorance.

It is true, that our hearts are exceedingly deceitful; but God, in his holy word, hath given that light with respect to our duty, which is accommodated to the state of darkness in which we are. So that by thorough care and inquiry, we may know our duty, and know whether or no we live in any sinful way. And every one who hath any true love to God and his duty, will be glad to have any assistance in this in-

quiry. It is with such persons a concern which lies with much weight upon their spirits, in all things to walk as God would have them, and so as to please and honor him. If they live in any way which is offensive to God, they will be glad to know it, and do by no means choose to have it concealed from them.

All those also, who in good earnest make the inquiry, *What shall I do to be saved?* Will be glad to know whether they do not live in some sinful way of behavior. For if they live in any such way, it is a great disadvantage to them with respect to that great concern. It behoves every one who is seeking salvation, to know and avoid every sinful way in which he lives. The means by which we must come to the knowledge of this, are two, viz. the knowledge of the rule, and the knowledge of ourselves.

1st. If we would know whether we do not live in some way of sin, we should take a great deal of pains to be thoroughly acquainted with the rule. God hath given us a true and perfect rule by which we ought to walk. And that we might be able, notwithstanding our darkness, and the disadvantages which attend us, to know our duty; he hath laid the rule before us abundantly. What a full and abundant revelation of the mind of God have we in the scriptures! And how plain is it in what relates to practice! How often are rules repeated! In how many various forms are they revealed, that we might the more fully understand them!

But to what purpose will all this care of God to inform us be, if we neglect the revelation which God hath made of his mind, and take no care to become acquainted with it? It is impossible that we should know whether we do not live in a way of sin, unless we know the rule by which we are to walk. The sinfulness of any way consists in its disagreement from the rule; and we cannot know whether it agree with the rule or not, unless we be acquainted with the rule. Rom. iii. 20. "By the law is the knowledge of sin."

Therefore, lest we go in ways displeasing to God, we ought with the greatest diligence to study the rules which God hath

given us. We ought to read and search the Holy Scriptures much, and to do it with the design to know the whole of our duty, and in order that the word of God may be "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths," Psalm cxix. 105. Every one ought to strive to get knowledge in divine things, and to grow in such knowledge, to the end that he may know his duty, and know what God would have him to do.

These things being so, are not the greater part of men very much to blame in that they take no more pains or care to acquire the knowledge of divine things? In that they no more study the Holy Scriptures, and other books which might inform them? As if it were the work of ministers only, to take pains to acquire this knowledge. But why is it so much a minister's work to strive after knowledge, unless it be, that others may acquire knowledge by him? Will not many be found inexcusable in the sinful ways in which they live through ignorance and mistake, because their ignorance is a wilful, allowed ignorance? They are ignorant of their duty, but it is their own fault that they are so; they have advantages enough to know, and may know it if they will; but they take no pains to acquire knowledge in such things. They are careful to acquire knowledge, and to be well skilled in their outward affairs, upon which their temporal interest depends; but will not take pains to know their duty.

We ought to take great pains to be well informed, especially in those things which relate to our particular cases.

2dly. The other mean is the knowledge of ourselves, as subject to the rule. If we would know whether we do not live in some way of sin, we should take the utmost care to be well acquainted with ourselves, as well as with the rule, that we may be able to compare ourselves with the rule. When we have found what the rule is, then we should be strict in examining ourselves, whether or no we be conformed to the rule. This is the direct way in which our characters are to be discovered. It is one thing wherein man differs from brute creatures, that he is capable of selfreflection, or of reflecting upon his own actions, and what passes in his own mind, and considering the

nature and quality of them. And doubtless it was partly for this end that God gave us this power, which is denied to other creatures, that we might know ourselves, and consider our own ways.

We should examine our hearts and ways, until we have satisfactorily discovered either their agreement or disagreement with the rules of scripture. This is a matter that requires the utmost diligence, lest we overlook our own irregularities, lest some evil way in us should lie hid under a disguise, and pass unobserved. One would think we are under greater advantages to be acquainted with ourselves, than with any thing else; for we are always present with ourselves, and have an immediate consciousness of our own actions: All that passeth in us, or is done by us, is immediately under our eye. Yet really in some respects the knowledge of nothing is so difficult to be obtained, as the knowledge of ourselves. We should therefore use great diligence in prying into the secrets of our hearts, and in examining all our ways and practices. That you may the more successfully use those means to know whether you do not live in some way of sin; be advised,

1. Evermore to join selfreflection with reading and hearing the word of God. When you read or hear, reflect on yourselves as you go along, comparing yourselves and your own ways with what you read or hear. Reflect and consider what agreement or disagreement there is between the word and your ways. The scriptures testify against all manner of sin, and contain directions for every duty; as the apostle saith, 2 Tim. iii. 16. "And is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Therefore when you there read the rules given us by Christ and his apostles, reflect and consider, each one of you with himself, Do I live according to this rule? Or do I live in any respect contrary to it?

When you read in the historical parts of Scripture an account of the sins of which others have been guilty, reflect on yourselves as you go along, and inquire whether you do not in

some degree live in the same or like practices. When you there read accounts how God reproved the sins of others, and executed judgments upon them for their sins, examine whether you be not guilty of things of the same nature. When you read the examples of Christ, and of the saints recorded in scripture, inquire whether you do not live in ways contrary to those examples. When you read there how God commended and rewarded any persons for their virtues and good deeds, inquire whether you perform those duties for which they were commended and rewarded, or whether you do not live in the contrary sins or vices. Let me further direct you, particularly to read the scriptures to these ends, that you may compare and examine yourselves in the manner now mentioned.

So if you would know whether you do not live in some way of sin, whenever you hear any sin testified against, or any duty urged, in the preaching of the word, be careful to look back upon yourselves, to compare yourselves and your own ways with what you hear, and strictly examine yourselves, whether you live in this or the other sinful way which you hear testified against; and whether you do this duty which you hear urged. Make use of the word as a glass, wherein you may behold yourselves.

How few are there who do this as they ought to do! Who, while the minister is testifying against sin, are busy with themselves in examining their own hearts and ways! The generality rather think of others, how this or that person lives in a manner contrary to what is preached; so that there may be hundreds of things delivered in the preaching of the word, which properly belong to them, and are well suited to their cases; yet it never so much as comes into their minds, that what is delivered any way concerns them. Their minds readily fix upon others, and they can charge others, but never think with themselves whether or no they be the persons.

2. If you live in any ways which are generally condemned by the better, and more sober sort of men, be especially careful to inquire concerning these, whether they be not ways of sin. Perhaps you have argued with yourselves, that such or

such a practice is lawful; you cannot see any evil in it. However, if it be generally condemned by godly ministers, and the better and more pious sort of people, it certainly looks suspiciously, whether or no there be not some evil in it; so that you may well be put upon inquiring with the utmost strictness, whether it be not sinful. The practice being so generly disapproved of by those who in such cases are most likely to be in the right, may reasonably put you upon more than ordinarily nice and diligent inquiry concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of it.

3. Examine yourselves, whether all the ways in which you live, are likely to be pleasant to think of upon a deathbed. Persons often in health allow and plead for those things, which they would not dare to do, if they looked upon themselves as shortly about to go out of the world. They in a great measure still their consciences as to ways in which they walk, and keep them pretty easy, while death is thought of as at a distance: Yet reflections on these same ways are very uncomfortable when they are going out of the world. Conscience is not so easily blinded and muffled then as at other times.

Consider therefore and inquire diligently whether or no you do not live in some practice or other, as to the lawfulness of which, when it shall come into your minds upon your deathbed, you will choose to have some further satisfaction, and some better argument than you now have, to prove that it is not sinful, in order to your being easy about it. Think over your particular ways, and try yourselves, with the awful expectation of soon going out of the world into eternity, and earnestly endeavor impartially to judge what ways you will on a deathbed approve of, and rejoice in, and what you will disapprove of, and wish you had let alone.

4. Be advised to consider what others say of you, and improve it to this end, to know whether you do not live in some way of sin. Although men are blind to their own faults, yet they easily discover the faults of others, and are apt enough to speak of them. Sometimes persons live in ways which do not at all become them, yet are blind to it themselves, not see-

ing the deformity of their own ways, while it is most plain and evident to others. They themselves cannot see it, yet others cannot shut their eyes against it, cannot avoid seeing it.

For instance. Some persons are of a very proud behavior, and are not sensible of it; but it appears notorious to others. Some are of a very worldly spirit, they are set after the world, so as to be noted for it, so as to have a name for it; yet they seem not to be sensible of it themselves. Some are of a very malicious and envious spirit; and others see it, and to them it appears very hateful; yet they themselves do not reflect upon it. Therefore since there is no trusting to our own hearts, and our own eyes in such cases, we should make our improvement of what others say of us, observe what they charge us with, and what fault they find with us, and strictly examine whether there be not foundation for it.

If others charge us with being proud; or worldly, close, and niggardly; or spiteful and malicious; or with any other ill temper or practice; we should improve it in self reflection, to inquire whether it be not so. And though the imputation may seem to us to be very groundless, and we think that they, in charging us so and so, are influenced by no good spirit; yet if we act prudently, we shall take so much notice of it as to make it an occasion of examining ourselves.

Thus we should improve what our friends say to us and of us, when they, from friendship, tell us of any thing which they observe amiss in us. It is most imprudent, as well as most unchristian, to take it amiss, and resent it ill, when we are thus told of our faults: We should rather rejoice in it, that we are shown the spots which are upon us. Thus also we should improve what our enemies say of us. If they, from an ill spirit, reproach and revile us to our faces, we should consider it, so far as to reflect inwardly upon ourselves, and inquire whether it be not so, as they charge us. For though what is said, be said in a reproachful, reviling manner; yet there may be too much truth in it. When men revile others even from an ill spirit towards them; yet they are likely to fix upon real faults; they are likely to fall upon us where we are

weakest and most defective, and where we have given them most occasion. An enemy will soonest attack us where we can least defend ourselves; and a man that reviles us, though he do it from an unchristian spirit, and in an unchristian manner, yet will be most likely to speak of that, for which we are really most to blame, and are most faulted by others.

So when we hear of others talking against us behind our backs, though they do very ill in so doing, yet the right improvement of it will be, to reflect upon ourselves, and consider whether we indeed have not those faults which they lay to our charge. This will be a more Christian and a more wise improvement of it, than to be in a rage, to revile again, and to entertain an ill will towards them for their evil speaking. This is the most wise and prudent improvement of such things. Hereby we may get good out of evil; and this is the surest way to defeat the designs of our enemies in reviling and backbiting us. They do it from ill will, and to do us an injury; but in this way we may turn it to our own good.

5. Be advised, when you see others' faults, to examine whether there be not the same in yourselves. This is not done by many, as is evident from this, that they are so ready to speak of others' faults, and aggravate them, when they have the very same themselves. Thus, nothing is more common than for proud men to accuse others of pride, and to declaim against them upon that account. So it is common for dishonest men to complain of being wronged by others. When a person seeth ill dispositions and practices in others, he is not under the same disadvantage in seeing their odiousness and deformity, as when he looks upon any ill disposition or practice in himself. He can see how odious these and those things are in others; he can easily see what an hateful thing pride is in another; and so of malice, and other evil dispositions or practices. In others he can easily see their deformity; for he doth not look through such a deceitful glass, as when he sees the same things in himself.

Therefore, when you see others' faults; when you take notice, how such an one acts amiss, what an ill spirit he shows,

and how unsuitable his behaviour is; when you hear others speak of it, and when you yourselves find fault with others in their dealings with you, or in things wherein you are any way concerned with them; then reflect, and consider, whether there be nothing of the same nature in yourselves. Consider that these things are just as deformed and hateful in you as they are in others. Pride, an haughty spirit and carriage, are as odious in you as they are in your neighbor. Your malicious and revengeful spirit towards your neighbor, is just as hateful as a malicious and revengeful spirit in him towards you. It is as unreasonable for you to wrong, and to be dishonest with your neighbor, as it is for him to wrong and be dishonest with you. It is as injurious and unchristian for you to talk against others behind their backs, as it is for others to do the same with respect to you.

6. Consider the ways in which others are blinded as to the sins in which they live, and strictly inquire whether you be not blinded in the same ways. You are sensible that others are blinded by their lusts; consider whether the prevalence of some carnal appetite or lust of the mind have not blinded you. You see how others are blinded by their temporal interest; inquire whether your temporal interest do not blind you also in some things, so as to make you approve of things, and allow yourselves in things which are not right. You are as liable to be blinded through inclination and interest, and have the same deceitful and wicked hearts as other men: Prov. xxvii. 19. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

II. I proceed now to the SECOND thing proposed in the use of the doctrine, viz. to mention some particulars as to which it becomes you to examine yourselves, that you may know whether you do not live in some way of sin. I desire all those would strictly examine themselves in the following particulars, who are concerned not to live in any way of sin, as I hope there are a a considerable number of such now present; and this certainly will be the case with all who are godly, and all who are duly concerned for their own salvation.

1. Examine yourselves with respect to the Sabbath day; whether you do not live in some way of breaking or profaning God's holy Sabbath. Do you strictly in all things keep this day, as sacred to God, in governing your thoughts, words, and actions, as the word of God requires on this holy day? Inquire whether you do not only fail in PARTICULARS, but whether you do not live in some WAY, whereby this day is profaned; and particularly inquire concerning three things.

(1.) Whether it be not a frequent thing with you to encroach upon the Sabbath at its beginning,* and after the Sabbath is begun to be out at your work, or following that worldly business which is proper to be done only in our own time. If this be a thing in which you allow yourselves, you live in a way of sin; for it is a thing which can by no means be justified. You have no more warrant to be out with your team, or to be cutting wood, or doing any other worldly business, immediately after the Sabbath is begun, than you have to do it in the middle of the day. The time is as holy near the beginning of the Sabbath as it is the middle; it is the whole that we are to rest, and to keep holy, and devote to God; we have no licence to take any part of it to ourselves.

When men often thus encroach upon the Sabbath, it cannot be from any necessity which can justify them; it can only be for want of due care, and due regard to holy time. They can with due care get their work finished, so that they can leave it by a certain hour. This is evident by this, that when they are under a natural necessity of finishing their work by a certain time, then they do take that care as to have done before that time comes: As for instance, when they are aware that at such a time it will be dark, and they will not be able to follow their work any longer, but will be under a natural necessity of leaving off; why, then, they will and do take care ordinarily to have finished their work before that time; and

* It may be necessary here to inform some readers, that it was the sentiment of the author, as well as of the country in general where he lived, that the Sabbath begins with the evening preceding the day, and is to be *celebrated from evening to evening*, Lev. xxiii. 32.

this although the darkness sometimes begins sooner, and sometimes later.

This shows, that with due care men can ordinarily have done their work by a limited time. If proper care will finish their work by a limited time when they are under a natural necessity of it, the same care would as well finish it by a certain time when we are only under a moral necessity. If it were so, that men knew that as soon as ever the Sabbath should begin, it would be perfectly dark, so that they would be under a natural necessity of leaving off their work abroad by that time, then we should see that they would generally have their work done before the time. This shows that it is only for want of care, and of regard to the holy command of God, that men so frequently have some of their work abroad to do after the Sabbath is begun.

Nehemiah took great care that no burden should be borne after the beginning of the Sabbath, Nehem. xiii. 19. "And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath," i. e. began to be darkened by the shade of the mountains before sunset, "I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath; and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should be no burden brought in on the Sabbath day."

(2.) Examine whether it be not your manner to talk on the Sabbath of things unsuitable for holy time. If you do not move such talk yourselves, yet when you fall into company that sets you the example, are you not wont to join in diverting talk, or in talk of worldly affairs, quite wide from any relation to the business of the day? There is as much reason that you should keep the Sabbath holy with your tongues, as with your hands. If it be unsuitable for you to employ your hands about common and worldly things, why is it not as unsuitable for you to employ your tongues about them?

(3.) Inquire whether it be not your manner to loiter away the time of the Sabbath, and to spend it in a great measure in idleness, in doing nothing. Do you not spend more time on

Sabbath day, than on other days, on your beds, or otherwise idling away the time, not improving it as a precious opportunity of seeking God, and your own salvation?

2. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin with respect to the institutions of God's house. Here I shall mention several instances.

(1.) Do you not wholly neglect some of those institutions, as particularly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Perhaps you pretend scruples of conscience, that you are not fit to come to that ordinance, and question whether you be commanded to come. But are your scruples the result of a serious and careful inquiry? Are they not rather a cloak for your own negligence, indolence, and thoughtlessness concerning your duty? Are you satisfied, have you thoroughly inquired and looked into this matter? If not, do you not live in sin, in that you do not more thoroughly inquire? Are you excusable in neglecting a positive institution, when you are scrupulous about your duty, and yet do not thoroughly inquire what it is?

But be it so, that you are unprepared; is not this your own sin, your own fault? And can sin excuse you from attending on a positive institution of Christ?

When persons are like to have children to be baptized, they can be convinced that it is their duty to come. If it be only conscience that detained them, why doth it not detain them as well now as heretofore? Or if they now be more thorough in their inquiries concerning their duty, ought they not to have been thorough in their inquiries before as well as now?

(2.) Do you not live in sin, in living in the neglect of singing God's praises? If singing praise to God be an ordinance of God's public worship, as doubtless it is, then it ought to be attended and performed by the whole worshipping assembly. If it be a command that we should worship God in this way, then all ought to obey this command, not only by joining with others in singing, but in singing themselves. For if we suppose it answers the command of God for us only to join in our hearts with others, it will run us into this absurdity, that

all may do so ; and then there would be none to sing, none for others to join with.

If it be an appointment of God, that Christian congregations should sing praises to him, then doubtless it is the duty of *all ;* if there be no exception in the rule, then all ought to comply with it, unless they be incapable of it, or unless it would be an hinderance to the other work of God's house, as the case may be with ministers, who sometimes may be in great need of that respite and intermission after public prayers, to recover their breath and strength, so that they may be fit to speak the word. But if persons be now not capable, because they know not how to sing, that doth not excuse them, unless they have been incapable of learning. As it is the command of God, that all should sing, so all should make conscience of learning to sing, as it is a thing which cannot be decently performed at all without learning. Those, therefore, who neglect to learn to sing, live in sin, as they neglect what is necessary in order to their attending one of the ordinances of God's worship.

Not only should persons make conscience of learning to sing themselves, but parents should conscientiously see to it, that their children are taught this among other things, as their education and instruction belong to them.

(3) Are you not guilty of allowing yourselves in sin, in neglecting to do your part towards the removal of scandals from among us ? All persons that are in the church, and the children of the church are under the watch of the church ; and it is one of those duties to which we are bound by the covenant which we either actually or virtually make, in uniting ourselves to a particular church, that we will watch over our brethren, and do our part to uphold the ordinances of God in their purity. This is the end of the institution of particular churches, viz. the maintaining of the ordinances of divine worship there, in the manner which God hath appointed.

Examine whether you have not allowed yourselves in sin with respect to this matter, through fear of offending your

neighbors. Have you not allowedly neglected the proper steps for removing scandals, when you have seen them; the steps of reproving them privately, where the case would allow of it, and of telling them to the church, where the case required it? Instead of watching over your brother, have you not rather hid yourselves, that you might not be witnesses against him? And when you have seen scandal in him, have you not avoided the taking of proper steps according to the case?

(4.) Art not thou one whose manner it is, to come late to the public worship of God, and especially in *winter*, when the weather is cold? And dost thou not live in sin in so doing? Consider whether it be a way which can be justified; whether it be a practice which doth honor to God and religion; whether it have not the appearance of setting light by the public worship and ordinances of God's house. Doth it not show that thou dost not prize such opportunities, and that thou art willing to have as little of them as thou canst? Is it not a disorderly practice? And if all should do as thou dost, what confusion would it occasion?

(5.) Art thou not one whose manner it commonly is to sleep in the time of public service? And is not this to live in a way of sin? Consider the matter rationally; is it a thing to be justified, for thee to lay thyself down to sleep, while thou art present in the time of divine service, and pretendest to be one of the worshipping assembly, and to be hearing a message from God? Would it not be looked upon as an high affront, an odious behavior, if thou shouldst do so in the presence of a king, while a message was delivering to thee, in his name, by one of his servants? Canst thou put a greater contempt on the message which the King of kings sendeth to thee, concerning things of the greatest importance, than from time to time to lay thyself down, and compose thyself to sleep, while the messenger is delivering his message to thee?

(6.) Art thou not one who is not careful to keep his mind intent upon what is said and done in public worship? Dost thou not, in the midst of the most solemn acts of worship,

suffer thy thoughts to rove after worldly objects, worldly cares and concerns, or perhaps the objects of thy wicked lusts and desires? And dost thou not herein live in a way of sin?

3. The next thing I shall propose to you to examine yourselves about, is, whether you do not live in some secret sin; whether you do not live in the neglect of some secret duty, or secretly live in some practice which is offensive to the pure and all seeing eye of God. Here you should examine yourselves concerning all secret duties, as reading, meditation, secret prayer; whether you intend those at all, or if you do, whether you do not attend them in an unsteady and careless manner. You should also examine yourselves concerning all secret sins. Strictly inquire what your behavior is, when you are hid from the eye of the world, when you are under no other restraints than those of conscience, when you are not afraid of the eye of man, and have nothing to fear but the allseeing eye of God.

Here, among many other things which might be mentioned, I shall particularly mention two.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not live in the neglect of the duty of reading the holy scriptures. The holy scriptures were surely written to be read; and unless we be *Popish* in our principles, we shall maintain, that they were not only given to be read by ministers, but by the people too. It doth not answer the design for which they were given, that we have once read them, and that we once in a great while read something in them. They were given to be always with us, to be continually conversed with, as a rule of life. As the artificer must always have his rule with him in his work; and the blind man that walks must always have his guide by him; and he that walks in darkness must have his light with him; so the scriptures were given to be *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path.*

That we may continually use the scriptures as our rule of life, we should make them our daily companion, and keep them with us continually. Josh. i. 8. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate

therein day and night." See also Deut. vi. 6, 7, 8. 9. So Christ commands us to search the scriptures, John. v 39. These are the mines wherein we are to dig for wisdom as for hidden treasures. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in the neglect of this duty, or neglect it so far, that you may be said to live in a way of sin.

(2.) Inquire whether you do not live in some way of secretly gratifying some sensual lust. There are many ways and degrees, wherein a carnal lust may be indulged ; but every way is provoking to an holy God. Consider whether, although you restrain yourselves from more gross indulgences, you do not, in some way or other, and in some degree or other, secretly from time to time gratify your lusts, and allow yourselves to taste the sweets of unlawful delight.

Persons may greatly provoke God, by only allowedly gratifying their lusts in their thoughts and imaginations. They may also greatly provoke God by excess and intemperance in gratifying their animal appetites in those things which are in themselves lawful. Inquire, therefore, whether you do not live in some sinful way or other, in secretly gratifying a sinful appetite.

4. I would propose to you, to examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin, in the spirit and temper of mind which you allow towards your neighbor.

(1.) Do you not allow and indulge a passionate, furious disposition? If your natural temper be hasty and passionate, do you truly strive against such a temper, and labor to govern your spirit? Do you lament it, and watch over yourselves to prevent it? Or do you allow yourselves in a fiery temper? Such a disposition doth not become a *Christian*, or a *man*. It doth not become a man, because it unmans him ; it turns a man from a rational creature to be like a wild beast. When men are under the prevalency of a furious passion, they have not much of the exercise of reason. We are warned to avoid such men, as being dangerous creatures, Prov. xxii. 24, 25. "Make no friendship with an angry man ; and with a furious

man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul."

(2.) Do you not live in hatred towards some or other of your neighbors? Do you not hate him for real or supposed injuries that you have received from him? Do you not hate him, because he is not friendly towards you, and because you judge that he hath an ill spirit against you, and hates you, and because he opposes you, and doth not show you that respect which you think belongs to you, or doth not show himself forward to promote your interest or honor? Do you not hate him, because you think he despises you, has a mean thought of you, and takes occasion in his talk of you to show it? Do you not hate him, because he is of the opposite party to that which is in your interest, and because he has considerable influence in that party?

Doubtless you will be loath to call it by so harsh a name as *hatred;* but inquire seriously and impartially, whether it be any thing better. Do you not feel ill towards him? Do you not feel a prevailing disposition within you to be pleased when you hear him talked against and run down, and to be glad when you hear of any dishonor put upon him, or of any disappointments which happen to him? Would you not be glad of an opportunity to be even with him for the injuries which he hath done you? And wherein doth hatred work but in such ways as these?

(3.) Inquire whether you do not live in envy towards some one at least of your neighbors. Is not his prosperity, his riches, or his advancement in honor, uncomfortable to you? Have you not, therefore, an ill will, or at least less good will to him, because you look upon him as standing in your way, you look upon yourself as depressed by his advancement? And would it not be pleasing to you now, if he should be deprived of his riches, or of his honors, not from pure respect to the public good, but because you reckon he stands in your way? Is it not merely from a selfish spirit that you are so uneasy at his prosperity?

5. I shall propose to your consideration, whether you do not live in some way of sin, and wrong in your dealings with your neighbors.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not from time to time injure and defraud those with whom you deal. Are your ways with your neighbor altogether just, such as will bear a trial by the strict rules of the word of God, or such as you can justify before God? Are you a faithful person? May your neighbors depend on your word? Are you strictly and firmly true to your trust, or any thing with which you are betrusted, and which you undertake? Or do you not by your conduct plainly show, that you are not conscientious in such things?

Do you not live in a careless, sinful neglect of paying your debts? Do you not, to the detriment of your neighbor, sinfully withhold that which is not your own, but his? Are you not wont to oppress your neighbor? When you see another in necessity, do you not thence take advantage to screw upon him? When you see a person ignorant, and perceive that you have an opportunity to make your gains of it, are you not wont to take such an opportunity? Will you not deceive in buying and selling, and labor to blind the eyes of him of whom you buy, or to whom you sell, with deceitful words, hiding the faults of what you sell, and denying the good qualities of what you buy, and not strictly keeping to the truth, when you see that falsehood will be an advantage to you in your bargain?

(2.) Do you not live in some wrong which you have formerly done your neighbor, without repairing it? Are you not conscious that you have formerly, at some time or other, wronged your neighbor, and yet you live in it, have never repaired the injury which you have done him? If so, you live in a way of sin.

6. I desire you would examine yourselves, whether you do not live in the neglect of the duties of charity towards your neighbor. You may live in sin towards your neighbor, though you cannot charge yourselves with living in any injustice in your dealings. Here also I would mention two things.

(1.) Whether you are guilty of sinfully withholding from your neighbor who is in want. Giving to the poor, and giving liberally and bountifully, is a duty absolutely required of us. It is not a thing left to persons' choice to do as they please; nor is it merely a thing commendable in persons to be liberal to others in want; but it is a duty as strictly and absolutely required and commanded as any other duty whatsoever, a duty from which God will not acquit us; as you may see in Deut. xv. 7, 8. &c.: And the neglect of this duty is very provoking to God. Prov. xxi. 13. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also himself shall cry, and not be heard."

Inquire, therefore, whether you have not lived in a way of sin in this regard. Do you not see your neighbor suffer, and be pinched with want, and you, although sensible of it, harden your hearts against him, and are careless about it? Do you not, in such a case, neglect to inquire into his necessities, and to do something for his relief? Is it not your manner to hide your eyes in such cases, and to be so far from devising liberal things, and endeavoring to find out the proper objects and occasions of charity, that you rather contrive to avoid the knowledge of them? Are you not apt to make objections to such duties, and to excuse yourselves? And are you not sorry for such occasions, on which you are forced to give something, or expose your reputation? Are not such things grievous to you? If these things be so, surely you live in sin, and in a great sin, and have need to inquire, whether your spot be not such as is not the spot of God's children.

(2.) Do you not live in the neglect of reproving your neighbor, when you see him going on in a way of sin? This is required of us by the command of God, as a duty of love and charity which we owe our neighbor: Lev. xix. 17. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." When we see our neighbor going on in sin, we ought to go, and in a Christian way deal with him about it. Nor will it excuse us, that we fear it will have no good effect; we cannot certainly tell what effect it will have. This is past doubt,

that if Christians generally performed this duty as they ought to do, it would prevent abundance of sin and wickedness, and would deliver many a soul from the ways of death.

If a man, going on in the ways of sin, saw that it was generally disliked and discountenanced, and testified against by others, it would have a strong tendency to reform him. His regard for his own reputation would strongly persuade him to reform; for hereby he would see that the way in which he lives makes him odious in the eyes of others. When persons go on in sin, and no one saith any thing to them in testimony against it, they know not but that their ways are approved, and are not sensible that it is much to their dishonor to do as they do. The approbation of others tends to blind men's eyes, and harden their hearts in sin; whereas, if they saw that others utterly disapprove of their ways, it would tend to open their eyes and convince them.

If others neglect their duty in this respect, and our reproof alone will not be so likely to be effectual; yet that doth not excuse us; for if one singly may be excused, then every one may be excused, and so we shall make it no duty at all.

Persons often need the reproofs and admonitions of others, to make them sensible that the ways in which they live are sinful; for, as hath been already observed, men are often blinded as to their own sins.

7. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin in your conversation with your neighbors. Men commit abundance of sin, not only in the business and dealings which they have with their neighbors, but in their talk and converse with them.

(1.) Inquire whether you do not keep company with persons of a lewd and immoral behavior, with persons who do not make conscience of their ways, are not of sober lives, but, on the contrary, are profane and extravagant, and unclean in their communication. This is what the word of God forbids, and testifies against: Prov. xiv. 7. "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge;" Prov. xiii. 20. "A companion of fools shall

be destroyed." The Psalmist professes himself clear of this sin. Psalm xxvi 4, 5. "I have not sat with vain persons; neither will I go with dissemblers: I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked."

Do you not live in this sin? Do you not keep company with such persons? and have you not found them a snare to your souls? If you have any serious thoughts about the great concerns of your souls, have you not found this a great hindrance to you? Have you not found that it hath been a great temptation to you? Have you not been from time to time led into sin thereby? Perhaps it may seem difficult wholly to forsake your old wicked companions. You are afraid they will deride you, and make a game of you; therefore you have not courage enough to do it. But whether it be difficult or not, yet know this, that if you continue in such connexions, you live in a way of sin, and, as the scripture saith, *you shall be destroyed*. You must either cut off your right hands, and pluck out your right eyes, or else even go with them into the fire that never shall be quenched.

(2.) Consider whether, in your conversation with others, you do not accustom yourselves to evil speaking. How common is it for persons, when they meet together, to sit and spend their time in talking against others, judging this or that of them, spreading ill and uncertain reports which they have heard of them, running down one and another, and ridiculing their infirmities! How much is such sort of talk as this the entertainment of companies when they meet together! And what talk is there which seems to be more entertaining, to which persons will more listen, and in which they will seem to be more engaged, than such talk! You cannot but know how common this is.

Therefore examine whether you be not guilty of this. And can you justify it? Do you not know it to be a way of sin, a way which is condemned by many rules in the word of God? Are you not guilty of eagerly taking up any ill report which you hear of your neighbor, seeming to be glad that you have some news to talk of, with which you think others will be en-

tertained? Do you not often spread ill reports which you hear of others, before you know what ground there is for them? Do you not take a pleasure in being the reporter of such news? Are you not wont to pass a judgment concerning others, or their behavior, without talking to them, and hearing what they have to say for themselves? Doth not that folly and shame belong to you which is spoken of in Prov. xviii. 13. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

This is utterly an iniquity, a very unchristian practice, which commonly prevails, that men, when they hear or know of any ill of others, will not do a Christian part, in going to talk with them about it, to reprove them for it, but will get behind their backs before they open their mouths, and there are very forward to speak, and to judge, to the hurt of their neighbor's good name. Consider whether you be not guilty of this. Consider also how apt you are to be displeased when you hear that others have been talking against you! How forward you are to apply the rules, and to think and tell how they ought first to have come and talked with you about it, and not to have gone and spread an ill report of you, before they knew what you had to say in your vindication!

How ready are persons to resent it, when others meddle with their private affairs, and busy themselves, and judge, and find fault, and declaim against them! How ready are they to say, it is no business of theirs! Yet are you not guilty of the same?

(3.) Is it not your manner to seem to countenance and fall in with the talk of the company in which you are, in that which is evil? When the company is vain in its talk, and falls into lewd discourse, or vain jestery, is it not your manner, in such a case, to comply and fall in with the company, to seem pleased with its talk, if not to join with it, and help to carry on such discourse, out of compliance with your company, though indeed you disapprove of it in your hearts? So inquire whether it be not your manner to fall in with your companions, when they are talking against others. Do you not help forward the

discourse, or at least seem to fall in with their censures, and the aspersions they cast on others, and the reflections they make upon their neighbors' characters?

There are some persons, who, in case of difference between persons or parties, are doubletongued, will seem to fall in with both parties. When they are with those on one side, they will seem to be on their side, and to fall in with them, in their talk against their antagonists. At another time, when they are with those of the other side, they will seem to comply with them, and will condemn the other party; which is a very vile and deceitful practice. Seeming to be friendly to both before their faces, they are enemies to both behind their backs; and that upon so mean a motive as the pleasing of the party with which they are in company. They injure both parties, and do what in them lies to establish the difference between them. Inquire whether or no this be your manner.

(4.) Is it not your manner, not to confine yourselves to strict truth in your conversation with your neighbors? Lying is accounted ignominious and reproachful among men; and they take it in high disdain to be called liars; yet how many are there that do not so govern their tongues, as strictly to confine them to the truth! There are various degrees of transgressing in this kind. Some, who may be cautious of transgressing in one degree, may allow themselves in another. Some, who commonly avoid speaking directly and wholly contrary to truth, in a plain matter of fact; yet perhaps are not strictly true in speaking of their own thoughts, desires, affections, and designs, and are not exact to the truth, in the relations which they give of things in conversation; scruple not to vary in circumstances, to add some things, to make their story the more entertaining; will magnify and enlarge things, to make their relation the more wonderful; and in things wherein their interest or credit is concerned, will make false representations of things; will be guilty of an unwarrantable equivocation, and a guileful way of speaking, wherein they are chargeable with a great abuse of language. In order to save their veracity, words and sentences must be wrested to a

meaning quite beside their natural and established signification.

Whatever interpretation such men put on their own words, they do not save themselves from the guilt of lying in the sight of God. Inquire whether you be not guilty of living in sin in this particular.

8. Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way of sin in the families to which you belong. There are many persons who appear well among their neighbors, and seem to be of an honest civil behavior in their dealings and conversation abroad; yet if you follow them to their own houses, and to the families to which they belong, there you will find them very perverse in their ways; there they live in ways which are very displeasing to the pure all searching eyes of God. You have already been directed to examine your conversation abroad; you have been directed to search the house of God, and to see if you have brought no defilement into it; you have been directed to search your closets, to see if there be no pollution or provocation there; be advised now to search your houses, examine your behavior in the families to which you belong, and see what your ways and manners are there.

The houses to which we belong are the places where the generality of us spend the greater part of our time. If we respect the world as a man's sphere of action, a man's own house is the greater part of the world to him; i. e. the greater part of his actions and behavior in the world is limited within this sphere. We should therefore be very critical in examining our behavior, not only abroad, but at home. A great proportion of the wickedness that men are guilty of, and that will be brought out at the day of judgment, will be the sin which they shall have committed in the families to which they belong.

Therefore inquire how you behave yourselves in the family relations in which you stand. As those relative duties which we owe towards the members of the same family belong to

the second table of the law, so love is the general duty which comprises them all.

Therefore,

(1.) Examine yourselves, whether you do not live in some way which is contrary to that love which is due to those who belong to the same family. Love, implying an hearty good will, and a behavior agreeable to it, is a duty which we owe to all mankind. We owe it to our neighbors, to whom we are no otherwise related than as they are our neighbors; yea, we owe it to those who stand in no relation to us, except that they are of mankind, are reasonable creatures, the sons and daughters of Adam. It is a duty that we owe to our enemies; how much more then do we owe it to those who stand in so near a relation to us, as an husband or wife, parents or children, brethren or sisters!

There are the same obligations on us to love such relatives as to love the rest of mankind. We are to love them as men; we are to love them as our neighbors; we are to love them as belonging to the same Christian church; and not only so, but here is an additional obligation, arising from that near relation in which they stand to us. This is over and above the other. The nearer the relation, the greater is the obligation to love. To live in hatred, or in a way that is contrary to love, towards any man, is very displeasing to God; but how much more towards one of the same family! Love is the uniting band of all societies, Col. iii. 14. "And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

The union in love in our own family should be so much the stronger, as that society is more peculiarly our own, and is more appropriated to ourselves, or is a society in which we are more especially interested. Christ saith, Matth. vii. 22. "I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." If this be true concerning those who are our breth-

ren only as men, or professing Christians, how much more concerning those who are of the same family ? If contention be so evil a thing in a town among neighbors, how much more hateful is it between members of the same family ? If hatred, envy, or revenge, be so displeasing to God, towards those who are only our fellow creatures, how much more provoking must it be between those that are our natural brothers and sisters, and are one bone and flesh ? If only being angry with a neighbor without a cause be so evil, how much sin must needs be committed in those broils and quarrels between the nearest relations on earth ?

Let every one inquire how it is with himself. Do you not in this respect allow yourselves in some way of sin ? Are you not often jarring and contending with those who dwell under the same roof ? Is not your spirit often ruffled with anger towards some of the same family ? Do you not often go so far as to wish evil to them in your hearts, to wish that some calamity would befall them ? Are you not guilty of reproachful language towards them, if not of revengeful acts ? Do you not neglect and refuse those offices of kindness and mutual helpfulness which become those who are of one family ? Yea, are there not some who really go so far, as in some degree to entertain a settled hatred or malice against some of their nearest relations ?

But here I would particularly apply myself,

[1.] To husbands and wives. Inquire whether you do not live in some way of sin in this relation. Do you make conscience of performing all those duties which God in his word requires of persons in this relation ? Or do you allow yourselves in some ways which are directly opposite thereto ? Do you not live in ways that are contrary to the obligations into which you entered in your marriage covenant ? The promises which you then made are not only binding as promises which are ordinarily made between man and man, but they have the nature of vows or promisory oaths; they are made in the presence of God, because they respect him as a witness to them;

and therefore the marriage covenant is called THE COVENANT OF GOD, Prov. ii. 17, "which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God." When you have vowed that you will behave towards those to whom you are thus united, as the word of God directs in such a relation, are you careless about it, no more thinking what you have promised and vowed, regardless how you perform those vows?

Particularly, are you not commonly guilty of bitterness of spirit towards one another, and of unkindness in your language and behavior? If wrath, and contention, and unkind and reproachful language, be provoking to God, when only between neighbors; what is it then between those whom God hath joined together to be one flesh, and between whom he hath commanded so great and dear a friendship to be maintained? Eph. v. 28, 29. "So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Eph. v. 25. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

It is no excuse at all for either party to indulge bitterness and contention in this relation, that the other party is to blame; for when was there ever one of fallen mankind to be found, who had no faults? When God commanded such an entire friendship between man and wife, he knew that the greater part of mankind would have faults; yet he made no exception. And if you think your yoke fellows have faults, you should consider whether you yourselves have not some too. There never will be any such thing as persons living in peace one with another, in this relation, if this be esteemed a sufficient and justifiable cause of the contrary. It becomes good friends to cover one another's faults: *Love covers a multitude of faults.* Prov. x. 1. "Hatred stirreth up strife; but love covereth all sins." But are not you rather quick to spy faults, and ready to make the most of them? Are not very little things often the occasion of contention between you? Will not a little thing often ruffle your spirits towards your

companions? And when any misunderstanding is begun, are you not guilty of exasperating one another's spirits by unkind language, until you blow up a spark into a flame?

Do you endeavor to accommodate yourselves to each other's tempers? Do you study to suit each other? Or do you set up your own wills, to have your own ways, in opposition to each other, in the management of your family concerns? Do you make it your study to render each other's lives comfortable? Or is there not, on the contrary, very often subsisting between you, a spirit of ill will, a disposition to vex and cross one another?

Husbands do sometimes greatly sin against God, in being of an unkind, imperious behavior towards their wives, treating them as if they were servants; and (to mention one instance of such treatment in particular) laying them under unjust and unreasonable restraints in the use and disposal of their common property; forbidding them so much as to dispose of any thing in charity, as of their own judgment and prudence. This is directly contrary to the word of God, where it is said of the virtuous wife, Prov. xxxi. 20, that "she stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." If God hath made this her duty, then he hath given her this right and power, because the duty supposes the right. It cannot be the duty of her who hath no right to dispose of any thing, to stretch forth her hand to the poor, and to reach forth her hands to the needy.

On the other hand, are not the commands of God, the rules of his word, and the solemn vows of the marriage covenant, with respect to the subordination which there ought to be in this relation, made light of by many? Eph. v. 22. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord." So Col. iii. 18. What is commanded by God, and what hath been solemnly vowed and sworn in his presence, certainly ought not to be made a jest of; and the person who lightly violates these obligations will doubtless be treated as one who slights the authority of God, and takes his name in vain.

[2.] I shall apply myself to parents and heads of families. Inquire whether you do not live in some way of sin with respect to your children, or others committed to your care; and particularly inquire,

1. Whether you do not live in sin, by living in the neglect of instructing them. Do you not wholly neglect the duty of instructing your children and servants? Or if you do not wholly neglect it, yet do you not afford them so little instruction, and are you not so unsteady, and do you not take so little pains in it, that you live in a sinful neglect? Do you take pains in any measure proportionate to the importance of the matter? You cannot but own that it is a matter of vast importance, that your children be fitted for death, and saved from hell; and that all possible care be taken that it be done speedily; for you know not how soon your children may die. Are you as careful about the welfare of their souls as you are of their bodies? Do you labor as much that they may have eternal life, as you do to provide estates for them to live on in this world?

Let every parent inquire, whether he do not live in a way of sin in this respect; and let masters inquire, whether they do not live in a way of sin, in neglecting the poor souls of their servants; whether their only care be not to make their servants subservient to their worldly interest, without any concern what becomes of them to all eternity.

2. Do you not live in a sinful neglect of the government of your families? Do you not live in the sin of Eli? Who indeed counselled and reproved his children, but did not exercise government over them. He reproved them very solemnly, as 1 Sam. ii. 23, 24, 25; but he did not restrain them; by which he greatly provoked God, and brought an everlasting curse upon his house. 1 Sam. iii. 12. "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. When I begin, I will also make an end. I will judge his house forever; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

If you say you cannot restrain your children, this is no excuse; for it is a sign that you have brought up your children without government, that your children regard not your authority. When parents lose their government over their children, their reproofs and counsel signify but little. How many parents are there who are exceedingly faulty on this account! How few are there who are thorough in maintaining order and government in their families! How is family government in a great measure vanished! And how many are as likely to bring a curse upon their families, as Eli! This is one principal ground of the corruptions which prevail in the land. This is the foundation of so much debauchery, and of such corrupt practices among young people. Family government is in a great measure extinct. By neglect in this particular, parents bring the guilt of their children's sins upon their own souls, and the blood of their children will be required at their hands.

Parents sometimes weaken one another's hands in this work; one parent disapproving what the other doth; one smiling upon a child, while the other frowns; one protecting, while the other corrects. When things in a family are thus, children are like to be undone. Therefore let every one examine whether he do not live in some way of sin with respect to this matter.

[3.] I shall now apply myself to children. Let them examine themselves, whether they do not live in some way of sin towards their parents. Are you not guilty of some undutifulness towards them, in which you allow yourselves? Are you not guilty of despising your parents for infirmities which you see in them? Undutiful children are ready to contemn their parents for their infirmities. Are not you sons of Ham, who saw and made a derision of his father's nakedness, whereby he entailed a curse on himself and his posterity to this day; and not the sons of Shem and Japheth, who covered the nakedness of their father? Are you not guilty of dishonoring and despising your parents for natural infirmities, or those of old age? Prov. xxiii. 22. "Despise not thy mother when

she is old." Doth not that curse belong to you, in Deut. xxvii. 16. "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or mother?"

Are you not wont to despise the counsels and reproofs of your parents? When they warn you against any sin, and reprove you for any misconduct, are you not wont to set light by it, and to be impatient under it? Do you honor your parents for it? On the contrary, do you not receive it with resentment, proudly rejecting it? Doth it not stir up corruption, and a stubborn and perverse spirit in you, and rather make you to have an ill will to your parents, than to love and honor them? Are you not to be reckoned among the fools mentioned, Prov. xv. 5. "A fool despiseth his father's instruction?" And doth not that curse belong to you, Prov. xxx. 17. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it?"

Do you not allow a fretful disposition towards your parents, when they cross you in any thing? Are you not apt to find fault with your parents, and to be out of temper with them?

Consider, that if you live in such ways as these, you not only live in sin, but in that sin, than which there is scarcely any one oftener threatened with a curse in the word of God.

III. We come now to the *third* thing proposed in this use of the doctrine, viz. to mention some things, to convince those, who, upon examination, find that they do live in some way of sin, of the importance of their knowing and amending their manner of life. You have had directions laid before you, how to find out whether you do live in any way of sin or not; and you have heard many particulars mentioned as proper subjects for your examination of yourselves. How then do you find things? Do you find yourselves clear of living in any way of sin? I mean not whether you find yourselves clear of sin; that is not expected of any of you; for there is not a man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth

not, 1 Kings viii. 46. But is there not some way of sin in which you *live*, which is your *stated way*, or *practice?* There are doubtless some who are clear in this matter, some "who are undefiled in the way, and do no iniquity," Psal. cxix. 1, 2, 3.

Let your own consciences answer how you find with respect to yourselves, by those things which have been proposed to you. Do you not find that you are guilty? That you live in a way of sin, and have allowed yourselves in it?....If this be the case, then consider the following things.

1. If you have been long seeking salvation, and have not yet succeeded, it may be this hath been the cause. You have perhaps wondered what hath been the matter, that you have been so long a time under concern about your salvation, that you have taken so much pains, and all seems to be to no purpose. You have many a time cried earnestly to God, yet he doth not regard you. Others obtain comfort, but you are left in darkness. But it is no wonder at all, if you have lived in some way of sin all this while. If you have lived in any sinful way, this is a sufficient reason why all your prayers and all your pains have been blasted.

If all this while you have lived in some sinful way, so far you have failed of seeking salvation in the right way. The right way of seeking salvation is, to seek it in the diligent performance of all duties, and in the denial of all ungodliness. If there be any one member that is corrupt, and you cut it not off, there is danger that it will carry you to hell, Matth. v. 29, 30.

2. If grace have not been in flourishing, but, on the contrary, in languishing circumstances in your souls, perhaps this is the cause. The way to grow in grace is to walk in the way of obedience to all the commands of God, to be very thorough in the practice of religion. Grace will flourish in the hearts of those who live in this manner; but if you live in some way of sin, that will be like some secret disease at your vitals, which will keep you poor, weak, and languishing.

One way of sin lived in will wonderfully keep you down in your spiritual prosperity, and in the growth and strength of grace in your hearts. It will grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and will in a great measure banish him from you: This will prevent the good influence of the word and ordinances of God to the causing of grace to flourish in you. It will be a great obstacle to their good effect. It will be like an ulcer within a man, which, while it remains, will keep him weak and lean, though you feed him with ever so wholesome food, or feast him ever so daintily.

3. If you have been left to fall into great sin, perhaps this was the occasion of it. If you have been left greatly to wound your own souls, perhaps this was what made way for it, that you allowed yourselves in some way of sin. A man who doth not avoid every sin, and is not universally obedient, cannot be well guarded against great sins. The sin in which he lives will be always an inlet, an open door, by which Satan from time to time will find entrance. It is like a breach in your fortress, through which the enemy may get in, and find his way to you, greatly to hurt and wound you.

If there be any way of sin which is retained as an outlet to corruption, it will be like a breach in a dam, which, if it be let alone, and be not stopped, will grow bigger and wider, and will endanger the whole. If any way of sin be lived in, it will be like Gideon's ephod, which was a snare to him and his house.

4. If you live very much in spiritual darkness, and without the comfortable presence of God, it may be this is the cause. If you complain that you have but little sweet communion with God, that you seem to be left and deserted of God, that God seems to hide his face from you, and but seldom gives you the sweet views of his glory and grace, that you seem to be left very much to grope in darkness, and to wander in a wilderness; perhaps you have wondered what is the matter; you have cried to God often, that you might have the light of his countenance, but he heareth you not; and you have sorrowful days and nights upon this account. But if you have

found, by what hath been said, that you live in some way of sin, it is very probable that is the cause, that is the root of your mischief, that is the *Achan*, the troubler that offends God, and causes him to withdraw, and brings so many clouds of darkness upon your souls. You grieve the Holy Spirit by the way in which you live ; and that is the reason that you have no more comfort from him

Christ hath promised, that he will manifest himself to his disciples ; but it is upon the condition, that they keep his commands. John xiv. 21. " He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my father ; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." But if you habitually live in disobedience to any of the commandments of Christ, then it is no wonder that he doth not give you the comfortable manifestations of himself. The way to receive the special favors of God, and to enjoy comfortable communion with him, is to walk closely with him.

5. If you have been long doubting about your condition, perhaps this is the cause. If persons be converted, the most likely way to have the evidences of it clear, and to have the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits, that we are the children of God, is to walk closely with God. This, as we have observed already, is the way to have grace in a flourishing state in the soul ; it is the way to have the habits of grace strengthened, and the exercises of it lively. And the more lively the exercises of grace are, the more likely will they be to be seen. Besides, this is the way to have God manifesting himself to us, as our father and our friend, to have the manifestations and inward testimonies of his love and favor.

But if you live in some way of sin, it is no wonder if that greatly darkens your evidences, as it keeps down the exercises of grace, and hides the light of God's countenance. And it may be that you never will come to a comfortable resolution of that point, whether you be converted or not, until you shall have wholly forsaken the way of sin in which you live.

6. If you have met with frowns of Providence, perhaps this hath been the cause. When you have met with very sore rebukes and chastisements, that way of sin hath probably been your troubler. Sometimes God is exceedingly awful in his dealings with his own people in this world, for their sins. Moses and Aaron were not suffered to enter into Canaan, because they believed not God, and spake unadvisedly with their lips, at the waters of Meribah. And how terrible was God in his dealings with David! What affliction in his family did he send upon him! One of his sons ravishing his sister; another murdering his brother, and, having expelled his father out of his kingdom, openly in the sight of all Israel, and in the sight of the sun, defiling his father's concubines on the top of the house, and at last coming to a miserable end! Immediately after this followed the rebellion of Sheba; and he had this uncomfortable circumstance attending the end of his life, that he saw another of his sons usurping the crown.

How awfully did God deal with Eli, for living in the sin of not restraining his children from wickedness! He killed his two sons in one day; brought a violent death upon Eli himself; took the ark from him, and sent it into captivity; cursed his house forever; and sware that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice and offering for ever; that the priesthood should be taken from him, and given to another family; and that there should never be an old man in his family.

Is not some way of sin in which you live the occasion of the frowns and rebukes of Providence which you have met with? True, it is not the proper business of your neighbors to judge you with respect to events of Providence; but you yourselves ought to inquire, wherefore God is contending with you, Job. ix. 10.

7. If death be terrible to you, perhaps this is the foundation of it. When you think of dying, you find you shrink back at the thought. When you have any illness, or when there is any thing which seems any way to threaten life, you find you are affrighted by it; the thoughts of dying, and going into

eternity, are awful to you ; and that although you entertain a hope that you are converted. If you live in some way of sin, probably this is very much the foundation of it. This keeps your minds sensual and worldly, and hinders a lively sense of heaven and heavenly enjoyments. This keeps grace low, and prevents that relish of heavenly enjoyments which otherwise you would have. This prevents your having the comfortable sense of the divine favor and presence ; and without that no wonder you cannot look death in the face without terror.

The way to have the prospect of death comfortable, and to have undisturbed peace and quiet when we encounter death, is, to walk closely with God, and to be undefiled in the way of obedience to the commands of God ; and that it is otherwise sometimes with truly godly persons, is doubtless frequently owing to their living in ways displeasing to God.

8. If you find by these things which have been proposed to you, that you have lived in a way of sin, consider that if you henceforward live in the same way, you will live in known sin. Whether in time past it have been known sin or not, though you may have hitherto lived in it through ignorance or inadvertence ; yet if now you be sensible of it, henceforward, if you continue in it still, it will not be a sin of ignorance, but you will be proved to be of that class of men who live in ways of known sin.

SERMON XX.

The vain Self Flatteries of the Sinner.

PSALM xxxvi. 2.

FOR HE FLATTERETH HIMSELF IN HIS OWN EYES, UNTIL HIS INIQUITY BE FOUND TO BE HATEFUL.

IN the foregoing verse, David says, that the transgression of the wicked said within his heart, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes;" that is, when he saw that the wicked went on in sin, in an allowed way of wickedness, it convinced him, that he was not afraid of those terrible judgments, and of that wrath with which God hath threatened sinners. If he were afraid of these he could never go on so securely in sin, as he doth.

In our text he gives the reason why the wicked did not fear. It was a strange thing that men, who enjoyed such light as they did in the land of Israel, who read and heard those many awful threatenings which were written in the book of the law, should not be afraid to go on in sin. But saith the Psalmist, *They flatter themselves in their own eyes:* They have something or other which they make a foundation of encouragement, whereby they persuade themselves that they shall escape those judgments; and that makes them put far away the evil day.

In this manner he proceeds, until his iniquity be found to be hateful; that is, until he finds by experience that it is a more dreadful thing to sin against God, and break his holy commands, than he imagined. He thinks sin to be sweet, and hides it as a sweet morsel under his tongue: He loves it, and flatters himself in it, till at length he finds, by experience, that it is bitter as gall and wormwood. Though he thinks the commission of sin to be lovely, yet he will find the fruit of it to be hateful, and what he cannot endure. Prov. xxiii. 32. "At last it will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder."

Here observe,

1. The subject spoken of is the WICKED MAN, of whom the Psalmist had been speaking in the foregoing verse.

2. His action in flattering himself in his own eyes; i. e, he makes himself and his case to appear to himself, or in his own eyes, better than it is.

3. How long he continues so to do, *until his iniquity be found to be hateful.* Which may be taken for his sin itself, as the wicked will see how odious sin is to God, when he shall feel the effects of his hatred, and how hateful to angels and saints; or rather the cause is here put for the effect, the tree for its fruit, and he will find his iniquity to be hateful, as he will find the hatefulness and feel the terribleness of the FRUIT of his iniquity.

DOCTRINE.

Wicked men generally flatter themselves with hopes of escaping punishment, till it actually comes upon them.

There are but few sinners who despair, who give up the cause and conclude with themselves, that they shall go to hell; yet there are but few who do not go to hell. It is to be

feared that men go to hell every day out of this country ; yet very few of them suffer themselves to believe, that they are in any great danger of that punishment. They go on sinning and travelling in the direct road to the pit ; yet by one mean or other they persuade themselves that they shall never fall into it.

In my present discourse, I shall,

1. Mention some things in confirmation of the doctrine, that sinners flatter themselves with the hope of impunity.

2. Mention some of the various ways wherein sinners flatter themselves in that hope.

3. Show that sinners generally go on flattering themselves, till punishment actually overtakes them.

I. I am to mention some things in confirmation of the doctrine, that sinners flatter themselves with the hope of future impunity.

1. We are so taught in the word of God. Beside our text, you may see, Deut. xxix. 18, 19. "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God. Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he *bless himself in his heart*, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." Where it is supposed that they whose hearts turn away from God, and are roots that bear gall and wormwood, generally bless themselves in their hearts, saying, WE SHALL HAVE PEACE.

See also Psalm xlix. 17, 18. "When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: His glory shall not descend after him, though while he lived, he BLESSED HIS SOUL." And Psalm l. 21. "These things thou hast done, and I kept silence: Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee."

2. It is very evident, that sinners flatter themselves that they shall escape punishment, by this, that otherwise they would be in dreadful and continual distress. Otherwise, as long as they are in sin, they could never live and go about so chearfully as they now do: Their lives would be filled with sorrow and mourning, and they would be in continual uneasiness and distress; as much as those that are exercised with some violent pain of body. But it is evident that it is not in fact so; it is apparent that men are careless and secure; that they are not much concerned about future punishment, and that they cheerfully pursue their business and recreations. Therefore they undoubtedly flatter themselves, that they shall not be eternally miserable in hell, as they are threatened in the word of God.

3. It is evident that they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall escape punishment, as otherwise they would certainly be restrained, at least from many of those sins in which they now live: They would not proceed in wilful courses of sin. The transgression of the wicked convinced the Psalmist, and is enough to convince every one, that there is no fear of God before his eyes, and that he flatters himself in his own eyes. It would be impossible for men allowedly from day to day to do those very things, which they know are threatened with everlasting destruction, if they did not some way encourage themselves, they should nevertheless escape that destruction.

II. I shall mention some of the various ways wherein sinners flatter themselves in their own eyes.

1. Some flatter themselves with a secret hope, that there is no such thing as another world. They hear a great deal of preaching, and a great deal of talk about hell, and about the eternal judgment; but those things do not seem to them to be real. They never saw any thing of them; they never saw hell, never saw the devils and damned spirits; and therefore are ready to say with themselves, How do I know that there is any such thing as another world? When the beasts die, there is an end

of them, and how do I know but that it will be so with me? Perhaps all these things are nothing but the inventions of men, nothing but cunningly devised fables.

Such thoughts are apt to rise in the minds of sinners, and the devil sets in to enforce them. Such thoughts are an ease to them; therefore they wish they were true, and that makes them the more ready to think that they are indeed true. So that they are hardened in the way of sin, by infidelity and atheistical thoughts. Psalm xiv. 1. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Psalm xciv. 6, 7. "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, the Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it."

2. Some flatter themselves that death is a great way off, and that they shall hereafter have much opportunity to seek salvation; and they think if they earnestly seek it, though it be a great while hence, they shall obtain. Although they see no reason to conclude that they shall live long, and perhaps they do not positively conclude that they shall; yet it doth not come into their minds that their lives are really uncertain, and that it is doubtful whether they will live another year. Such a thought as this doth not take any hold of them. And although they do not absolutely determine that they shall live to old age or to middle age, yet they secretly flatter themselves with such an imagination. They are disposed to believe so, and do so far believe it, that they act upon it, and run the venture of it.

Men will believe that things will be as they choose to have them, without reason, and sometimes without the appearance of reason, as is most apparent in this case Psalm xlix. 11. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."

The prepossession and desire of men to have it so, is the principal thing that makes them believe so. However, there are several other things which they use as arguments to flatter themselves. Perhaps they think with themselves, that

since they are at present in health, or in youth, or that since they are useful men, do a great deal of good, and both themselves and others pray for the continuance of their lives; they are not likely to be removed by death very soon.

If they shall live many years in the world, they think that it is very probable they shall be converted before they die; as they expect hereafter to have much more convenient opportunities to become converted, than they have now. And by some means or other, they think they shall get through their work before they arrive at old age.

3. Some flatter themselves that they lead moral and orderly lives, and therefore think that they shall not be damned. They think with themselves that they live not in any vice, that they take care to wrong no man, are just and honest dealers; that they are not addicted to hard drinking, or to uncleanness, or to bad language; that they keep the Sabbath strictly, are constant attendants on the public worship, and maintain the worship of God in their families. Therefore they hope that God will not cast them into hell. They see not why God should be so angry with them as that would imply, seeing they are so orderly and regular in their walk; they see not that they have done enough to anger him to that degree. And if they have angered him, they imagine they have also done a great deal to pacify him.

If they be not as yet converted, and it be necessary that they should experience any other conversion in order to their salvation, they hope that their orderly and strict lives will move God to give them converting grace. They hope that surely God will not see those that live as they do go to hell. Thus they flatter themselves, as those we read of. Luke xviii. 9. "That trusted in themselves that they were righteous."

4. Some make the advantages under which they live an occasion of self flattery. They flatter themselves, because they live in a place where the gospel is powerfully preached, and among a religious people, where many have been converted; and they think it will be much easier for them to be saved on that account. Thus they abuse the grace of God to

their destruction ; they do that which the scriptures call *despising the riches of God's goodness :* Rom. ii. 4. " Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering ; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ?"

Some flatter themselves, because they are born of godly parents, who are dear to God, who have often and earnestly prayed for them, they hope that their prayers will be heard ; and that encourages them to go on in the way of neglecting their souls. The Jews had great dependence upon this, that they were the children of Abraham : John viii. 33. they make their boast. " We be Abraham's seed ; and in verse 39. " Abraham is our father."

5. Some flatter themselves with their own intentions. They intend to neglect themselves, and give themselves liberty for a while longer, and then to reform. Though now they neglect their souls, and are going on in sin ; yet they intend ere long to bestir themselves, to leave off their sins, and to set themselves to seek God. They hear that there is great encouragement for those who earnestly seek God, that they shall find him. So they intend to do ; they propose to seek with a great deal of earnestness. They are told, that there are many who seek to enter the kingdom of heaven, who shall not be able ; but they intend, not only to seek, but TO STRIVE. However, for the present they allow themselves in their ease, sloth, and pleasure, minding only earthly things.

Or if they should be seized with some mortal distemper, and should draw near to the grave, before the time which they lay out in their minds for reformation, they think how earnestly they would pray and cry to God for mercy ; and as they hear God is a merciful God, who taketh no delight in the death of sinners, they hence flatter themselves that they shall move God to have pity on them.

There are but few who are sinners, and know themselves to be such, who do not encourage themselves with intentions of future repentance and reformation ; but few who do not flatter themselves, that they shall in good earnest set them-

selves to seek God some time or other. Hell is full of GOOD INTENDERS, who never proved to be TRUE PERFORMERS: Acts xxiv. 25. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

6. There are some who flatter themselves, that they do, and have done, a great deal for their salvation, and therefore hope they shall obtain, when indeed they neither do what they ought to do, nor what they might do in their present state of unregeneracy; nor are they in any likely way to be converted. They think they are striving, when they neglect many moral and some instituted duties; nor do they exert themselves as if it were for their lives; they are not violent for the kingdom of heaven.

There are doubtless many such; many are concerned, and are seeking, and do many things, and think that they are in a very fair way to obtain the kingdom of God; yet there is great danger that they will prove at last to be some of the foolish virgins, and be found without oil in their vessels.

7. Some hope by their strivings to obtain salvation of themselves. They have a secret imagination, that they shall, by degrees, work in themselves sorrow and repentance of sin, and love towards God and Jesus Christ. Their striving is not so much an earnest seeking to God, as a striving to do themselves that which is the work of God. Many who are now seeking have this imagination, and labor, read, pray, hear sermons, and go to private meetings, with the view of making themselves holy, and of working in themselves holy affections.

Many, who only project and design to turn to God hereafter, are apt to think that it is an easy thing to be converted, that it is a thing which will be in their own power at any time, when they shall earnestly set themselves to it.

8. Some sinners flatter themselves, that they are already converted. They sit down and rest in a false hope, persuading themselves that all their sins are pardoned; that God loves them; that they shall go to heaven when they die; and that they need trouble themselves no more: Rev. iii. 17. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and

have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

III. Sinners very generally go on flattering themselves in some or other of these ways, till their punishment actually overtakes them. These are the baits by which Satan catches souls, and draws them into his snare. They are such self flatteries as these that keep men from seeing what danger they are in, and that make them go securely on in the way they are in, " as the bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

Those that flatter themselves with hopes of living a great while longer in the world, very commonly continue so to do till death comes. Death comes upon them when they expect it not ; they look upon it as a great way off, when there is but a step between them and death. They thought not of dying at that time, nor at any time near it. When they were young, they proposed to live a good while longer ; and if they happen to live till middle age, they still maintain the same thought, that they are not yet near death ; and so that thought goes along with them as long as they live, or till they are just about to die.

Men often have a dependence on their own righteousness, and as long as they live are never brought off from it. Multitudes uphold themselves with their own intentions, till all their prospects are dashed in pieces by death. They put off the work which they have to do till such a time ; and when that comes, they put it off to another time, until death, which cannot be put off, overtakes them. There are many also that hold a false hope, a persuasion that they belong to God ; and as long as they live, by all the marks and signs which are given of a true convert, they never will be persuaded to let go their hope, till it is rent from them by death.

Thus men commonly uphold themselves, and make themselves easy, till hell fire makes them uneasy. Everlasting ruin comes upon them as a snare, and all their hopes are at once cut off, and turned into everlasting despair : 1. Thess. v. 3.

"When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we learn one reason why there are but few saved, and why so many perish from under the gospel. All men know that they must die, and all that sit under the light of the gospel have been told many a time, that after this there is another world; that there are but two states in that other world, a state of eternal happiness, and a state of eternal misery; that there is but one way of escaping the misery and obtaining the blessedness of eternity, which is by obtaining an interest in Christ, through faith in him; and that this life is the only opportunity of obtaining an interest in Christ. Yet men are so much given to flatter themselves in those ways which we have mentioned, that there are but few that seasonably take care of their salvation. Indeed they cannot but be in some measure concerned about their souls; yet they flatter themselves with one thing or other, so that they are kept steadily and uninterruptedly going on in the broad way to destruction.

2. Hence we learn the reason why awakening truths of scripture, and awakening sermons, make no more impression upon men. It is in itself a wonderful and surprising thing, that God's denunciations of eternal misery, and threatenings of casting sinners into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever and ever, do not affect them, do not startle them. But the truth is, they flatter themselves, by such means as we have mentioned, that this dreadful misery is not for them; that they shall escape it, though multitudes of others are involved in it. They take not these threatenings to themselves; they seem to think that they do not belong to them.

How many are there in this congregation, who, for all the awakening sermons they have heard, are yet secure in sin! And who, although they are sensible that they are in a Christ-

less condition, and are still going on in sin, yet intend to go to heaven, and expect that by some means or other they shall arrive there. They are often told, that God is very angry with them; yet they think God is a very merciful God, and they shall be able to pacify him. If they be told how uncertain life is, that doth not awaken them, because they flatter themselves with long life. If they be told how dangerous it is to delay the business of religion, they promise themselves, that they will hereafter engage in it with more earnestness than others, and so obtain the end, the salvation of their souls. Others, when they are told that many shall seek who shall not be able to obtain, think surely, that they, having done so much, for salvation, shall not be denied.

3. Let every sinner examine himself, whether he do not flatter himself in some of those ways which have been mentioned. What is it in your own minds which makes you think it is safe for you to delay turning to God? What is it that encourages you to run such a venture as you do by delaying this necessary work? Is it that you hope there is no such state as heaven or hell, and have a suspicion that there is no God? Is it this that makes you secure? Or is it that you are not much afraid but that you shall have opportunity enough a great while hence to mind such things? Is it an intention of a future seeking a more convenient season? And are you persuaded that God will hearken to you then, after you shall have so long turned a deaf ear to his commands and gracious invitations? Are you encouraged to commit sin, because you hope to repent of it? Are you encouraged by the mercy of God to be his enemies? And do you resolve still to provoke him to anger, because you think he is easily pacified?

Or do you think that your conversion is in your own power, and that you can turn to God when you please? Is it because you have been born of godly parents that you are so secure? Or do you imagine that you are in a fair way to be converted? Do you think that what you have done in religion will engage God to pity you, and that he never can have the heart to condemn one who has lived in so orderly a manner? Or do

you think that you are indeed converted already? And doth that encourage you to take a liberty in sinning? Or are you secure, because you are so stupid as to think nothing about these things? Do you let these concerns wholly alone, and scarcely ever think at all how it will be with you after you are dead?

Certainly it must be one or more of these things which keeps you in your security, and encourages you to go on in sin. Examine, therefore, and see which of them it is.

4. By the text and doctrine be persuaded to leave off thus flattering yourselves in your own eyes. You are therein informed, that those who do as you do commonly continue so doing till their punishment actually comes upon them. Thereby you may be convinced of the vanity of all such flatteries. Be afraid of that which you are sure is the devil's bait: "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," Prov. i. 17.

You are not only told in the scriptures, that sinners are generally thus allured to hell, but your own reason may convince you that it is so. For doubtless other sinners have as much ground to hope to escape punishment as you; and it is evident, that they generally do hope to escape. Men under the gospel almost universally think they shall not go to hell: If it were otherwise, they could have no peace or comfort in the world. Yet what multitudes have we reason to conclude go down from under the preaching of the gospel to the pit of destruction! Now, this is surely enough to convince any sober, prudent person of the folly of such flattery, and of the folly of every one that doth not immediately set about his great work with his might. If you could have access to the damned, you would hear many of them curse themselves, for thus flattering themselves while they lived in this world; and you would have the same doctrine preached to you by their wailings and yellings which is now preached to you from the pulpit.

If your temptation to security be unbelief of the fundamental doctrines of religion, such as the being of God, of another

world, and an eternal judgment, you may consider, that though that makes you secure at present, yet it will not do always, it will not stand by when you come to die. The fool often in health saith, *There is no God;* but when he comes to die, he cannot rest in any such supposition. Then he is generally so much convinced in his own conscience, that there is a God, that he is in dreadful amazement for fear of his eternal wrath. It is folly, therefore, to flatter yourselves with any supposition now which you will not then be able to hold.

If you depend on long life, consider how many who have depended on the same thing, and had as much reason to depend on it as you, have died within your remembrance.

Is it because you are outwardly of an orderly life and conversation, that you think you shall be saved? How unreasonable is it to suppose, that God should be so obliged by those actions, which he knows are not done from the least respect or regard to him, but wholly with a private view! Is it because you are under great advantages that you are not much afraid but that you shall some time or other be converted, and therefore neglect yourselves and your spiritual interests? And were not the people of Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum, under as great advantages as you, when Christ himself preached the gospel to them, almost continually, and wrought such a multitude of miracles among them? Yet he says, that it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those cities.

Do you expect you shall be saved, however you neglect yourselves, because you were born of godly parents? Hear what Christ saith, Matth. iii. 9. "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father." Do you flatter yourselves that you shall obtain mercy, though others do not, because you intend hereafter to seek it more earnestly than others? Yet you deceive yourselves, if you think that you intend better than many of those others, or better than many who are now in hell once intended.

If you think you are in a way of earnest seeking, consider, whether or no you do not mind other things yet more? If you

imagine that you have it in your own power to work yourselves up to repentance, consider, that you must assuredly give up that imagination before you can have repentance wrought in you. If you think yourselves already converted, and that encourages you to give yourselves the greater liberty in sinning, this is a certain sign that you are not converted.

Wherefore abandon all these ways of flattering yourselves; no longer follow the devil's bait; and let nothing encourage you to go on in sin; but immediately and henceforth seek God with all your heart, and soul, and strength.

SERMON XXI.*

Wicked Men useful in their Destruction only.

EZEKIEL xv. 2, 3, 4.

SON OF MAN, WHAT IS THE VINE TREE MORE THAN ANY TREE? OR THAN A BRANCH WHICH IS AMONG THE TREES OF THE FOREST? SHALL WOOD BE TAKEN THEREOF TO DO ANY WORK? OR WILL MEN TAKE A PIN OF IT TO HANG ANY VESSEL THEREON? BEHOLD, IT IS CAST INTO THE FIRE FOR FUEL; THE FIRE DEVOURETH BOTH THE ENDS OF IT, AND THE MIDST OF IT IS BURNT: IS IT MEET FOR ANY WORK?

THE visible church of God is here compared to the vine tree, as is evident by God's own explanation of the allegory, in ver. 6, 7, and 8. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem," &c. And it may be understood of mankind in general. We find man often in scripture compared to a vine. So in chapter 32, of Deuteronomy, "Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are

* Dated July, 1734.

grapes of gall." And Psal. lxxx. 8. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt;" ver. 14. "Look down from heaven, behold, and visit this vine." And Cant. ii. 15. "The foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." Isai. v. at the beginning, "My beloved hath a vineyard, and he planted it with the choicest vine." Jer. ii. 21. "I had planted thee a noble vine." Hos. x. 1. "Israel is an empty vine." So in chap. 15, of John, visible Christians are compared to the *branches of a vine*.

Man is very fitly represented by the vine. The weakness and dependence of the vine on other things which support it, well represents to us what a poor, feeble, dependent creature man is, and how, if left to himself, he must fall into mischief, and cannot help himself. The visible people of God are fitly compared to a vine, because of the care and cultivation of the husbandman, or vine dresser. The business of husbandmen in the land of Israel was very much in their vineyards, about vines; and the care they exercised to fence them, to defend them, to prune them, to prop them up, and to cultivate them, well represented that merciful care which God exercises towards his visible people; and this latter is often in scripture expressly compared to the former.

In the words now read is represented,

1. How wholly useless and unprofitable, even beyond other trees, a vine is, in case of unfruitfulness: "What is a vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?" i. e. if it do not bear fruit. Men make much more of a vine than of other trees; they take great care of it, to wall it in, to dig about it, to prune it, and the like. It is much more highly esteemed than any one of the trees of the forest; they are despised in comparison with it. And if it bear fruit, it is indeed much preferable to other trees; for the fruit of it yields a noble liquor; as it is said in Jotham's parable, Judg. ix. 13. "And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man?"

But if it bear no fruit, it is more unprofitable than the trees of the forest; for the wood of them is good for timber; but the wood of the vine is fit for no work; as in the text, "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?"

2. The only thing for which a vine is useful, in case of barrenness, viz. for fuel: "Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel." It is wholly consumed; no part of it is worth a saving, to make any instrument of it, for any work.

DOCTRINE.

If men bring forth no fruit to God, they are wholly useless, unless in their destruction.

For the proof of this doctrine, I shall show,

1. That it is very evident, that there can be but two ways in which man can be useful, viz. either in *acting*, or in *being acted upon*, and *disposed of*.

2. That man can no otherwise be useful actively than by bringing forth fruit to God.

3. That if he bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which he can be passively useful, but in being destroyed.

4. In that way he may be useful without bearing fruit.

I. There are but two ways in which man can be useful, viz. either in acting or being acted upon. If man be an useful sort of creature, he must be so either actively or passively: There is no medium. If he be useful to any purpose, he must be so either in acting himself, or else in being disposed of by some other; either in doing something himself to that purpose, or else in having something done upon him by some other to that purpose. What can be more plain, than that if

man do nothing himself, and nothing be done with him or upon him by any other, he cannot be any way at all useful?

If man do nothing himself to promote the end of his existence, and no other being do any thing with him to promote this end, then nothing will be done to promote this end; and so man must be wholly useless. So that there are but two ways in which man can be useful to any purpose, viz. either actively or passively, either in doing something himself, or in being the subject of something done to him.

II. Man cannot be useful actively, any otherwise than in bringing forth fruit to God, than in serving God, and living to his glory. This is the only way wherein he can be useful in doing; and that for this reason, that the glory of God is the very thing for which man was made, and to which all other ends are subordinate. Man is not an independent being, but he derives his being from another; and therefore hath his end assigned him by that other: And he that gave him his being, made him for the end now mentioned. This was the very design and aim of the Author of man, this was the work for which he made him, viz. to serve and glorify his Maker.

Other creatures are made for inferior purposes. Inferior creatures were made for inferior purposes. But it is to be observed, that man is the creature that is highest, and nearest to God, of any in this lower world; and therefore his business is with God, although other creatures are made for lower ends. There may be observed a kind of gradation, or gradual ascent, in the order of the different kinds of creatures, from the meanest clod of earth to man, who hath a rational and immortal soul. A plant, an herb, or tree, is superior in nature to a stone or clod, because it hath a vegetable life. The brute creatures are a degree higher still; for they have sensitive life. But man, having a rational soul, is the highest of this lower creation, and is next to God; therefore his business is with God.

Things without life, as earth, water, &c. are subservient to things above them, as the grass, herbs, and trees. These

vegetables are subservient to that order of creatures which is next above them, the brute creation; they are for food to them. Brute creatures, again, are made for the use and service of the order above them; they are made for the service of mankind. But man being the highest of this lower creation, the next step from him is to God. He therefore is made for the service and glory of God. This is the whole work and business of man; it is his highest end, to which all other ends are subordinate.

If it had not been for this end, there never would have been any such sort of creature as man; there would have been no occasion for it. Other inferior ends may be answered as well, without any such creature as man. There would have been no sort of occasion for making so noble a creature, and endowing him with such faculties, only to enjoy earthly good, to eat, and to drink, and to enjoy sensual things. Brute creatures, without reason, are capable of these things, as well as man: Yea, if no higher end be aimed at than to enjoy sensitive good, reason is rather an hinderance than an help. It doth but render man the more capable of afflicting himself with care, and fears of death, and other future evils, and of vexing himself with many anxieties, from which brute creatures are wholly free, and therefore can gratify their senses with less molestation. Besides, reason doth but make men more capable of molesting and impeding one another in the gratification of their senses. If man have no other end to seek but to gratify his senses, reason is nothing but an impediment.

Therefore if man be not made to serve and glorify his Creator, it is wholly to no purpose that such a creature is made. Doubtless then the all wise God, who doth all things in infinite wisdom, hath made man for this end. And this is agreeable to what he hath taught us in many places in the scriptures. This is the great end for which man was made, and for which he was made such a creature as he is, having a body and soul, bodily senses and rational powers. For this is he placed in such circumstances as he is, and the earth is giv-

en him for a possession. For this he hath dominion given him over the rest of the creatures of this world. For this the sun shines on him, and the moon and stars are for signs and seasons to him, and the rain falls on him, and the earth yields him her increase.

All other ends of man are subordinate to this. There are inferior ends for which man was made. Men were made for one another; made for their friends and neighbors, and for the good of the public. But all these inferior ends are designed to be subordinate to the higher end of glorifying God; and therefore man cannot be actively useful, or actively answer any purpose, otherwise than by actively glorifying God, or bringing forth fruit to God. Because,

1. That is not actively useful which doth not actively answer its end: That which doth not answer its end is in vain; for that is the meaning of the proposition, that any thing is in vain. So that which doth not actively answer its end, is, as to its own activity, in vain.

2. That is as to its own activity altogether useless which actively answers only subordinate ends, without answering the ultimate end; and that because the ultimate end is the end of subordinate ends. The notion of a supreme end is, that it is the end of all inferior ends. Subordinate ends are to no purpose, only as they stand related to the highest end. The very notion of a subordinate end is, that it is in order to a further end. Therefore these inferior ends are good for nothing though they be obtained, unless they also obtain their end. Inferior ends are not aimed at for their own sake, but only for the sake of the ultimate end. Therefore he that fails of his great end of all, doth as much altogether fail of his end, and is as much to no purpose, as if he did not obtain his subordinate end.

I will illustrate this by two or three examples. The subordinate end of the underpinning of an house is to support the house; and the subordinate end of the windows is to let in the light. But the ultimate end of the whole is the benefit

of the inhabitants. Therefore, if the house be never inhabited, the whole is in vain. The underpinning is in vain, though it be ever so strong and support the building ever so well. The windows also are wholly in vain, though they be ever so large and clear, and though they obtain the subordinate end of letting in the light: They are as much in vain, as if they let in no light.

So the subordinate end of the husbandman in ploughing and sowing, and well manuring his field is, that it may bring forth a crop. But his more ultimate end is, that food may be provided for him and his family. Therefore though his inferior end be obtained, and his field bring forth ever so good a crop, yet if after all it be consumed by fire, or otherwise destroyed, he ploughed and sowed his field as much in vain, as if the seed had never sprung up.

So if man obtain his subordinate ends ever so fully; yet if he altogether fail of his ultimate end, he is wholly an useless creature. Thus if men be very useful in temporal things to their families, or greatly promote the temporal interest of the neighborhood, or of the public; yet if no glory be brought to God by it, they are altogether useless. If men actively bring no glory to God, they are, as to their own activity, altogether useless, how much soever they may promote the benefit of one another. How much soever one part of mankind may subserve another; yet if the end of the whole be not answered, every part is useless.

Thus if the parts of a clock subserve ever so well one to another, mutually to assist each other in their motions; one wheel moving another ever so regularly; yet if the motion never reach the hand or the hammer, it is altogether in vain, as much as if it stood still. As in a clock one wheel moves another, and that another, till at last the motion comes to the hand and hammer, which immediately respect the eye and the ear, otherwise all the motions are in vain; so it is in the world, one man was made to be useful to another, and one part of mankind to another; but the use of the whole is to bring glory to God the maker, or else all is in vain; and however a

man may serve among his fellow creatures, in a private or public capacity, upon the whole he is in vain.

It may perhaps be objected, that a wicked man may, by being serviceable to the public, be useful to many who do bring forth fruit to God, and thus glorify him.

Answer 1. If he be so, he is no further useful than he brings glory to God. It all hath an ultimate respect to that glory that is brought to God, and is useful no further; as the motion of no one wheel of a clock is any further useful, than as it finally respects the right pointing of the hand, and striking of the hammer.

Answer 2. When it is thus, wicked men are useful only accidentally, and not designedly. Although a wicked man may, by being serviceable to good men, do what will be an advantage to them to their bringing forth fruit to God; yet that serviceableness is not what he aims at; this is not his end; he doth not look so far for an ultimate end. And however this end be obtained, no thanks are due to him; it is as to him accidental. He is only the occasion, and not the designing cause of it. That fruit which is brought forth to the glory of God, is not brought forth by him, but by others.

The usefulness of such a man, being not designed, is not to be attributed to him as though it were his fruit. He is not useful *as a man*, or as a rational creature, because he is not so designedly. He is useful as things without life may be. Things without life may be useful to put the godly under advantages to bring forth fruit, as the timber and stones with which his house is built, the wool and flax with which he is clothed; but the fruit which is brought forth to God's glory, cannot be said for all that to be the fruit of these lifeless things, but of the godly man who makes use of them. So it is when wicked men put the godly under advantages to glorify God, as Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, and others have done.

III. If men bring not forth fruit to God, there is no other way in which they can be useful passively, but in being destroyed. They are fit for nothing else.

1. They are not fit to be suffered to continue always in this world. God suffers them to live for the present, but it is only for a certain season. They are here in a transitory state. It is not fit that this world should be the constant abode of those who bring forth no fruit to God. It is not fit that the barren tree should be allowed always to stand in the vineyard. The husbandman lets it stand for a while, till he digs about it, dungs it, and proves it to be incurable, or till a convenient time to cut it down come; but it is not fit that such a tree should stand here always. It is not fit that they who bring forth no fruit to God, should be suffered to live always in a world which is so full of the goodness of God, or that his goodness should be spent upon them forever.

This world, though it is fallen, and is under a curse, and is a miserable place to what it once was, yet is full of the streams of divine goodness. But it is not fit that those who bring forth no fruit to God, should always be continued in partaking of these streams. There are these three different states; a state wherein is nothing but good, which is the state of the blessed in heaven; a state wherein is a mixture of good and evil, which is the earthly state; and a state wherein is nothing but evil, which is the state of eternal destruction and damnation. Now they that bring forth no fruit to God, are not fit for either of the former; it is not fit that they should be continued in the enjoyment of any of the goodness of God.

It is not fit that an unprofitable, unfruitful creature, who will not glorify his Creator, should always live here to devour the fruits of the earth, and consume the fruits of divine bounty; to have the good things of this life, as God's wool and his flax, his corn, and wine, and oil, spent with him in vain. While a man lives in this world, the other creatures of the world are subjected to him. The brute creatures serve him with their labor and with their lives. The sun, moon, and stars, the clouds, fields and trees, all serve him. But it is not

fit that these creatures should always be made to serve him, who brings forth no fruit to the Creator. Why should God always keep his creatures in subjection to that man, who will not be subject to *him*? Why should the creation be always kept in such bondage, as to be subject to wicked men? The creatures are made subject to vanity for a little time; God hath subjected them to wicked men, and given them for their use. This however he would not have done, but as it is only for a little while; and the creatures can bear it through the hope of approaching deliverance; and otherwise it would have been intolerable. Rom. viii. 20. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope."

The creature doth, as it were, groan by reason of this subjection to wicked men, although it be but for a while. Rom. viii. 22. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." Therefore surely it would be no way fit that wicked men, who do no good, and bring forth no fruit to God, should live here always, to have the various creatures subservient to them, as they are now. The earth can scarcely bear wicked men during that short time for which they stay here, but is ready to spew them out. It is no way fit, therefore, that it should be forced to bear them always.

Men who bring forth no fruit to God are cumberers of the ground. Luke xiii. 7. "And it is not meet that they should be suffered to cumber the ground always." God cannot be glorified in this way of disposing of unfruitful persons. If such men should be suffered to live always in such a state as this, it would be so far from being to the glory of God, that it would be to the disparagement of the wisdom of God, to continue them in a state so unsuitable for them, forever spending the fruits of his bounty in vain upon them. It would also be a disparagement to his justice; for this is a world where, "all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." If there were no other state but this for wicked men to be in, justice could not possibly take

place. It would also reflect upon the holiness of God. Forever to uphold this world for an habitation of such persons, and forever to continue the communications of his bounty and goodness to them, would appear as though he were disposed to countenance and encourage sin and wickedness.

2. If men do not bring forth fruit to God, they are not fit to be disposed of in heaven. Heaven, above all others, is the most improper place for them. Every thing appertaining to that state is unsuitable for them. The company is most unsuitable. The original inhabitants of that world are the angels. But what a disagreeable union would that be, to unite wicked men and angels in the same society? The employments of that world are unsuitable. The employments are serving and glorifying God. How unsuitable then would it be to plant barren trees in that heavenly paradise, trees that would bring forth no fruit to the divine glory? The enjoyments of heaven are unsuitable. The enjoyments are holy and spiritual enjoyments, the happiness of beholding the glory of God, and praising his name, and the like. But these enjoyments are as unsuitable as can be to the carnal earthly minds of wicked men. They would be no enjoyments to them; but on the contrary would be most disagreeable, and what they cannot relish, but entirely nauseate.

The design of heaven is unsuitable to them. The design of God in making heaven was, that it might be a place of holy habitation, for the reward of the righteous, and not an habitation for wicked men. It would greatly reflect on the wisdom of God to dispose of wicked men there; for it would be the greatest confusion. But God is not the author of confusion, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. It would be contrary to the holiness of God, to take wicked men so near to himself, into his glorious presence, to dwell forever in that part of the creation which is, as it were, his own palace, and to sit at his table. We read in Psalm v. 4. "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee." Therefore it would doubtless be impossible that the end of the existence of

wicked men should be in any wise answered by the placing of them in heaven.

IV. Men who bring forth no fruit to God, yet in suffering destruction may be useful. Although they be not useful actively, or by any thing which they do; yet they may be useful in what they may suffer; just as a barren tree, which is no way useful standing in the vineyard, yet may be good fuel, and be very useful in the fire. God can find use for the most wicked men; he hath his use for vessels of wrath as well as for vessels of mercy; as in an house there is use for vessels unto dishonor, as well as for vessels unto honor. 2 Tim. ii. 20. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor." Prov. xvi. 4. "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." I shall briefly take notice of what ends God accomplishes by it.

1. Unfruitful persons are of use in their destruction for the glory of God's justice. It was the will of God to glorify his justice, as well as his mercy, on his creatures. The vindictive justice of God is a glorious attribute, as well as his mercy; and the glory of this attribute appears in the everlasting destruction and ruin of the barren and unfruitful.

The glory of divine justice in the perdition of ungodly men appears wonderful and glorious in the eyes of the saints and angels in heaven. Hence we have an account, that they sing praises to God, and extol his justice at the sight of the awful judgments which he inflicts on wicked men. Rev. xvi. 5, 6. "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art and wast, and art to come, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy:" And Rev. xix. 1. 2. "And after these things I heard a great voice, saying, Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great WHORE, which did corrupt the earth with

her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

2. Unfruitful persons in their destruction are of use for God to glorify his majesty upon them. The awful majesty of God remarkably appears in those dreadful and amazing punishments which he inflicts on those who rise up against him, and contemn him. A sense of the majesty of an earthly prince is supported very much by a sense of its being a dreadful thing to affront him. God glorifies his own majesty in the destruction of wicked men; and herein he appears infinitely great, in that it appears to be an infinitely dreadful thing to offend him. How awful doth the majesty of God appear in the dreadfulness of his anger! This we may learn to be one end of the damnation of the wicked, from Rom. ix. 22. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?"

It is often spoken of God, that he is a terrible God. It is a part of the majesty and glory of God, that he is a terrible God. God tells Pharaoh, that for this cause he raised him up, that he might show his power in him, and that his name might be declared through all the earth, in his destruction. Exod. ix. 15, 16; and again, chap. xiv 17. "I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

3. The destruction of the unfruitful is of use, to give the saints a greater sense of their happiness, and of God's grace to them. The wicked will be destroyed and tormented in the view of the saints, and other inhabitants of heaven. This we are taught in Rev. xiv. 10. "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And in Isaiah lxvi. 24. "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: For their worm shall not die,

neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

When the saints in heaven shall look upon the damned in hell, it will serve to give them a greater sense of their own happiness, seeing how vastly different their case is from their own. The view of the doleful condition of the damned will make them the more prize their own blessedness. When they shall see how dreadful the anger of God is, it will make them the more prize his love. They will rejoice so much the more that they are not the objects of God's anger, but of his favor; that they are not the subjects of his dreadful wrath, but are treated as his children, are taken near to him, to dwell in the everlasting embraces of his love.

When they shall see the misery of the damned, it will give them a greater sense of the distinguishing grace and love of God to them, that God should from all eternity set his love on them, and make so great a difference between them and others who are of the same species with them, are no worse by nature than they, and have deserved no worse of God than they. When they shall look upon the misery of the damned, and consider how different their own state is from theirs, and that it is only free and sovereign grace that makes the difference, what a great sense will this give them of the wonderful grace of God to them! And how will it heighten their praises! With how much greater admiration and exultation of soul will they sing of the free and sovereign grace of God to them!

When they shall look upon the damned, and see their misery, how will heaven ring with the praises of God's justice towards the wicked, and his grace towards the saints! And with how much greater enlargement of heart will they praise Jesus Christ their Redeemer, that ever he was pleased to set his love upon them, his dying love! And that he should so distinguish them as to spill his blood, and make his soul an offering, to redeem them from that so great misery, and to bring them to such exceeding happiness!

With what love and ecstacy will they sing that song in Rev. v. 9. 10. "Thou art worthy: For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tongue, and kindred, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." One end which the apostle mentions why God appointed vessels of wrath, is the more to make known the wonderfulness of his mercy towards the saints. In Rom. ix. 22, 23. there are two ends mentioned: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" That is one end, then another is mentioned immediately after: "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?"

APPLICATION.

I. Hence we may learn, how just and righteous God is in the destruction of those who bring forth no fruit to God. Seeing there is no other way in which they can be useful, or in which the end of their being can be obtained, certainly it is most just that God should thus dispose of them. Why should God be frustrated of his end through their perverseness? If men will not do the work for which he hath made and fitted them; if they, through a spirit of opposition and rebellion against God, refuse; yet why should God suffer himself to be disappointed of his end in making them? It doth not become the infinite greatness and majesty of God, to suffer himself to be disappointed and frustrated by the wickedness and perverseness of sinful worms of the dust. If God should suffer this, it would seem to argue, either a want of wisdom in God to fix upon a good end, or a want of power to accomplish it.

God made all men that they might be useful; and if they will not be useful in their conduct and actions, how just is it that God should make them useful in their sufferings! God made all men for his own glory; and if they, contrary to the

revealed will of God, refuse to glorify him actively and willingly, how just is it that God should glorify himself upon them in what he doth with them!

It hath been shown, that there is no other way wherein this can be done, but by their destruction. Surely, therefore, it must be just and righteous that God should destroy them.

Men are under no natural necessity of being put to this use of glorifying God in their sufferings. God gives them opportunity of glorifying him in doing, in bringing forth fruit, puts them under advantages for it, and uses many means to bring them to it. But if they will not be useful this way, it is very just that God should make them useful in the only remaining way in which they can be useful, viz. in their destruction. God is not forward to put them to this use. He tells us, that he hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live;" Ezek. xxxiii. 11. God represents the destruction of sinners as a work to which he is backward; yet it is meet that they should be destroyed, rather than that they should be suffered to frustrate God of the end of their being. Who can blame the husbandman for cutting down and burning a barren tree, after he hath digged about it, and dunged it, and used all proper means to make it fruitful?

Let those among us consider this, who have lived all their lives hitherto unprofitably, and never have brought forth any fruit to God's glory, notwithstanding all the means that have been used with them. Consider how just it would be if God should utterly destroy you, and glorify himself upon you in that way; and what a wonder of patience it is, that God hath not done it before now.

II. This subject ought to put you upon examining yourselves, whether you be not wholly useless creatures. You have now heard, that those who bring forth no fruit to God, are, as to any good they do, wholly useless. Inquire, therefore, whether you have ever in your lives brought forth any fruit to God. Have you ever done any thing from a gracious respect to God, or out of love to God? By only seeking your

worldly interest, you do not bring forth fruit to God. It is not bringing forth fruit to God, for you to come to public worship on the Sabbath, to pray in your families, and other such like things, merely in compliance with the general custom. It is not to bring forth fruit to God, that you be sober, moral and religious, only to be seen of men, or out of respect to your own credit and honor. How is that for God which is only for the sake of custom, or the esteem of men.

It is not to bring forth fruit to God, for men to pray, and read, and hear, and to be strict and diligent in religious and moral duties, merely from the fear of hell. What thanks are due to you for not loving your own misery, and for being willing to take some pains to escape burning in hell to all eternity? There is ne'er a devil in hell but would gladly do the same. Hos. x. 1. "Israel is an *empty* vine; he bringeth forth fruit *unto himself*."

There is no fruit brought forth to God, where there is nothing done in any wise from love to God, or from any true respect to him. God looketh at the heart. He doth not stand in need of our services, neither is he benefited by any thing that we can do. He doth not receive any thing of us, because it benefits him, but only as a suitable testimony of our love and respect to him. This is the fruit that he seeks. Men themselves will not accept of those shows of friendship, which they think are hypocritical, and come not from the heart. How much less should God, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men! John iv. 23. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Inquire, therefore, whether you ever in your lives did the least thing out of love to God. Have you not done all for yourselves? Zech. vii. 5, 6. "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"

III. Another use of this subject may be of *conviction* and *humiliation* to those who never have brought forth any fruit to God. If, upon examination, you find that you have never in all your lives done any thing out of a true respect to God, then it hath been demonstrated, that, as to any thing which you do, you are altogether useless creatures. And consider, what a shameful thing it is for such rational beings as you are, and placed under such advantages for usefulness, yet to be wholly useless, and to live in the world to no purpose!

We esteem it a very mean character in any person, that he is a worthless, insignificant person; and to be called so is taken as a great reproach. But consider seriously, whether you can clear yourselves of this character. Set reason to work; can you rationally suppose, that you do in any measure answer the end for which God gave you your being, and made you of a nature superior to the beasts? But that you may be sensible what cause you have to be ashamed of your unprofitableness, consider the following things.

1. How much God hath bestowed upon you, in the endowments of your nature. God hath made you rational, intelligent creatures, hath endowed you with noble powers, those endowments wherein the natural image of God consists. You are vastly exalted in your nature above other kinds of creatures here below. You are capable of a thousand times as much as any of the brute creatures. He hath given you a power of understanding, which is capable of vastly extending itself, of looking back to the beginning of time, and of considering what was before the world was, and of looking forward beyond the end of time. It is capable of extending beyond the utmost limits of the universe; and is a faculty whereby you are akin to angels, and are capable even of knowing God, of contemplating the divine Being, and his glorious perfections, manifested in his works and in his word. You have souls capable of being the habitation of the Holy Spirit of God, and his divine grace. You are capable of the noble employments of angels.

How lamentable and shameful it is, that such a creature should be altogether useless, and live in vain! How lamentable that such a noble and excellent piece of divine workmanship should fail of its end, and be to no purpose! Was it ever worth while for God to make you such a creature, with such a noble nature, and so much above other kinds of creatures, only to eat, and drink, and gratify your sensual appetites? How lamentable and shameful to you, that such a noble tree should be more useless than any tree of the forest; that man, whom God hath thus set in honor, should make himself more worthless than the beasts that perish!

2. How much God hath done for you in the creation of the world. He made the earth, and seas, and all the fulness of them, for the use of man, and hath given them to him. Psal. cxv. 16. "The earth hath he given to the children of men." He made the vast variety of creatures for man's use and service. Gen. i. 28. "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." For the same purpose he made all the plants, and herbs, and trees of the field. Gen. i. 29. "I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." He made the sun in the heavens, that glorious luminary, that wonderful globe of light, to give light to man, and to constitute the difference between day and night. He also made the moon, and the vast multitude of stars, for the use of man, to be to him *for signs and seasons.*

What great provision hath God made for man! What a vast variety of good things for food, and otherwise to be for his convenience, to put him under advantages to be useful! How lamentable is it, that after all these things he should be an useless creature in the world!

3. How much is done for you in the course of God's common providence! Consider how nature is continually laboring for you. The sun is, at it were, in a ferment for mankind, unweariedly running his course from year to year, and from

day to day, and spending his rays upon man, to put him under advantage to be useful; every day giving him light that he may have opportunity to behold the glorious wisdom of God, and to see and serve God. The winds and clouds are continually laboring for you, and the waters are going in a constant circulation, ascending in the air from the seas, descending in rain, gathering in streams and rivers, returning to the sea, and again ascending and descending, for you. The earth is continually laboring to bring forth her fruit for your support. The trees of the field are laboring and spending their strength for you. And how many of the poor brute creatures are continually laboring for you, and spending their strength for you! How much of the fulness of the earth is spent upon you! How many of God's creatures are devoured by you! How many of the lives of the living creatures of God are destroyed for your sake, for your support and comfort!

Now, how lamentable will it be, if, after all, you be altogether useless, and live to no purpose! What mere cumberers of the ground will you be! Agreeably to Luke xiii. 7. Nature, which thus continually labors for you, will be burdened with you. This seems to be what the apostle means, Rom. viii. 20, 21, 22, where he tells us, that the creation is made subject to vanity, and brought into the bondage of corruption; and that the whole creation groans, and travails in pain, under this bondage.

4. How much is done for you in the use of the means of grace. How much hath God done to provide you with suitable means and advantages for usefulness! How many prophets hath God sent into the world, in different ages, inspiring them with his Holy Spirit, and enabling them to work many miracles to confirm their word, whereby you now have the written word of God to instruct you! How great a thing hath God done for you, to give you opportunity and advantage to be useful, in that he hath sent his own Son into the world! He who is really and truly God, united himself to the human nature, and became man, to be a prophet and teacher to you and other sinners. Yea, he laid down his life to make atonement

for sin, that you might have encouragement to serve God with hopes of acceptance.

How many ordinances have been instituted for you! How much of the labor of the ministers of God hath been spent upon you! Is not that true concerning you which is written in Isai. v. at the beginning, concerning the vineyard planted in a very fruitful hill, and fenced and cultivated with peculiar care and pains, which yet proved unfruitful? How much hath the dresser of the vineyard digged about the barren tree, and dunged it, and yet it remains barren!

5. Consider what a shame it is that you should live in vain, when all the other creatures, that are inferior to you, do glorify their Creator, according to their nature. You who are so highly exalted in the world, are more useless than the brute creation; yea, than the meanest worms, or things without life, as earth and stones: For they all do answer their end, in the way in which nature hath fitted them for it; none of them fail of it. They are all useful in their places, all render their proper tribute of praise to their Creator; while you are mere nuisances in the creation, and burdens to the earth; as any tree of the forest is more useful than the vine, if it bear not fruit.

IV. Let me, in a farther application of this doctrine, *exhort* you by all means to bring forth fruit to God. Let it be your constant endeavor to be in this way actively useful in the world. Here consider three things.

1. What an honor it will be to such poor creatures as you are, to bring forth fruit to the divine glory. What is such a poor worm as man, that he should be enabled to bring forth any fruit to God! It is the greatest honor of the nature of man, that God hath given him a capacity of glorifying the great Creator. It is what no other creature in this lower world can do, in the same manner as man. There is no creature in the visible world that is capable of actively glorifying God, but man.

2. In bringing forth fruit to God, you will be so profitable to none as to yourselves; you cannot thereby be profitable to God. Job xxii. 2. "Can a man be profitable to God?" You may thereby be profitable to your fellow creatures; yet not so much as to yourselves. The fruit which you bring forth to God will be a greater benefit to yourselves than to any one living. You will be more useful to yourselves than to any one else.

Although you are under a natural obligation to bring forth fruit to God, yet God doth not require it of you without a reward. He will richly reward you for it. In requiring you to bring forth fruit to him, he doth but require you to bring forth fruit to your own happiness. You will taste the sweetness of your own fruit. It will be most profitable for you in this world to bring forth fruit to God; it will be exceedingly to your benefit while here. It will be pleasant to you to lead a fruitful and holy life; the pleasure will be beyond the labor. Beside this, God hath promised to such a life everlasting rewards, unspeakable, infinite benefits. So that by it you will infinitely advance your own interest.

3. If you remain thus unprofitable, and be not actively useful, surely God will obtain his end of you, in your destruction. He will say concerning the barren tree, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Christ, in John xv. 6, tells us, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This is spoken of the barren branches in the vine. How would you yourselves do in such a case with a barren tree in an orchard, or with weeds and tares in your fields? Doubtless, if it were in your power, you would utterly destroy them.

God will have his end; he will accomplish it. As it is not meet that God should be frustrated, so he will not be frustrated. Though all men and devils unite their endeavors, they cannot frustrate God in any thing; and "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished;" Prov. xi. 21. God hath sworn by his great name, that he will have his glory

of men, whether they will actively glorify him or no. Numb. xiv. 21, 22, 23. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me, see it."

"The ax lieth at the root of the trees; and every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire;" Matth. iii. 10. The end of those men who bring forth nothing but briers and thorns is to be burned, as in Heb. vi. 7, 8. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." So we read of the tares, Matth. xiii. 30. "Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them;" and in ver. 40, 41, 42, "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

So it is said of the chaff, Matth. iii. 12. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

If you continue not to bring forth any fruit to the divine glory, as you have hitherto done, hell will be the only fit place for you. It is a place prepared on purpose to be a receptacle of such persons. In hell nature ceases to labor any more for sinners: The sun doth not run his course to shine upon them, the earth doth not bring forth her fruits to be consumed

upon them there. There they will have no opportunity to consume the fruits of divine goodness on their lusts. In hell they can prejudice or encumber nothing, upon which God sets any value. There the faithful servants and ministers of God will no longer spend their strength in vain upon them. When the barren tree is in the fire, the servants of the husbandman are freed from any further labor or toil in digging about it, and manuring it.

In hell they will no more have opportunity to clog and discourage the flourishing of religion, and to destroy much good, as they often do in this world. In hell they will no more have opportunity to corrupt others by their ill example. In hell they will no more have it in their power to offend the godly; they may hurt and torment one another; but the godly will be out of their reach. In hell there will be no ordinances, no Sabbaths, no sacraments, no sacred things, for them to profane and defile by their careless and hypocritical attendance.

Hell, therefore, if you remain unfruitful and cumberers of the ground, will be the fittest place for you, and there you will surely have your portion assigned you. There God will get himself honor upon you; there he will magnify himself in your ruin, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and will be praised upon that account by the saints, at the day of judgment; and by all the host of heaven throughout everlasting ages.

SERMON XXII.*

The Fearfulness, which will hereafter surprise Sinners in Zion, represented and improved.

ISAIAH xxxiii. 14.

THE SINNERS IN ZION ARE AFRAID; FEARFULNESS HATH SURPRISED THE HYPOCRITES: WHO AMONG US SHALL DWELL WITH THE DEVOURING FIRE? WHO AMONGST US SHALL DWELL WITH EVERLASTING BURNINGS?

THERE are two kinds of persons among God's professing people; the one is those who are truly godly, who are spoken of in the verse following the text; "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly," &c. The other kind consists of sinners in Zion, or hypocrites. It is to be observed, that the prophet in this chapter speaks interchangeably, first to the one, and then to the other of these characters of men; awfully threatening and denouncing the wrath of God against the one, and comforting the other with gracious promises. Thus you may observe, in the 5th and 6th verses, there are comfortable promises to the godly; then in the eight following verses, awful judgments are threatened against the

* Dated December, 1740.

sinners in Zion. Again, in the two next verses are blessed promises to the sincerely godly, and in the former part of verse 17. And then in the latter part of verse 17, and in verses 18, and 19, are terrible threatenings to sinners in Zion: Then in the verses that follow are gracious promises to the godly.

Our text is part of what is said in this chapter to sinners in Zion. In verse 10, it is said, "Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself." i. e. Now will I arise to execute wrath upon the ungodly; I will not let them alone any longer. They shall see that I am not asleep, and that I am not regardless of mine own honor. "Now will I be exalted." Though they have cast contempt upon me, yet I will vindicate the honor of my own majesty: I will exalt myself, and show my greatness, and my awful majesty in their destruction. "Now will I lift up myself;" now I will no longer have mine honor to be trampled in the dust by them: But my glory shall be manifested in their misery.

In verse 11, the prophet proceeds, "Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble:" i. e. Ye shall pursue happiness in ways of wickedness, but you shall not obtain it; you are as ground which brings forth no fruit, as if only chaff were sowed in it; it brings forth nothing but stubble, which is fit for nothing but to be burned.

It seems to have been the manner in that land where the corn grew very rank, when they had reaped the wheat, and gathered it off from the ground, to set fire to the stubble; which is alluded to here; and therefore it is added, "Your breath, as fire, shall devour you:" i. e. Your own wicked speeches, your wickedness that you commit with your breath, or with your tongues, shall set fire to the stubble and devour it.

Then it follows in verse 12. "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime." As they are wont to burn lime in a great and exceeding fierce fire, till stones, and bones, and other things are burnt to lime; so shall the wicked be burnt in the fire of God's wrath. "As thorns cut up shall they be

burnt in the fire :" As briers and thorns are the incumbrance and curse of the ground where they grow, and are wont to be burnt; so shall it be with the wicked that are among God's people and grow in God's field. Heb. vi. 7, 8. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

Then it follows in verse 13. "Hear ye that are afar off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might." This implies that God will, by the destruction of ungodly men, manifest his glory very publicly, even in the sight of the whole world, both in the sight of those that are near, and of those that are afar off." "Acknowledge my might." Which implies that God will execute wrath upon ungodly men, in such a manner as extraordinarily to show forth his great and mighty power. The destruction and misery of the wicked will be so dreadful that it will be a dreadful manifestation of the omnipotent power of God, that he can execute so dreadful misery; agreeably to Rom. ix. 22. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction."

Next follow the words of the text: "The sinners in Zion are afraid: Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" The sense of the text is, That the time will come when fearfulness will surprise the sinners in Zion; because they will know, that they are about to be cast into a devouring fire, which they must suffer for ever and ever, and which none can endure. This I shall make the subject of my present discourse; and shall particularly speak upon the subject,

1. By inquiring, who are sinners in Zion?

2. By showing how fearfulness will hereafter surprise them.

3. By insisting on those reasons of this fear and surprise, which are mentioned in the text.

4. By showing why sinners IN ZION will be especially surprised with fear.

I. It may be inquired, who are the sinners in Zion?..... I answer, That they are those who are in a natural condition among the visible people of God. Zion, or the city of David of old, was a type of the church; and the church of God in scripture is perhaps more frequently called by the name of Zion than by any other name. And commonly by Zion is meant the true church of Christ, or the invisible church of true saints. But sometimes by this name is meant the visible church, consisting of those who are outwardly, by profession and external privileges, the people of God. This is intended by Zion in this text.

The greater part of the world are sinners: Christ's flock is, and ever hath been but a little flock. And the sinners of the world are of two sorts: There are those that are visibly of Satan's kingdom, who are without the pale of the visible church. Such are all who do not profess the true religion, nor attend the external ordinances of it. Beside these there are the sinners in Zion. Both are objects of the displeasure and wrath of God; but his wrath is more especially manifested in scripture against the latter. Sinners in Zion will have by far the lowest place in hell. They are exalted nearest to heaven in this world, and they will be lowest in hell in another. The same is meant in the text, by hypocrites, as sinners in Zion. Sinners in Zion are all hypocrites; for they make a profession of the true religion; they attend God's ordinances, and make a show of being the worshippers of God; but all is in hypocrisy.....I now hasten as was proposed,

II. To show how fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners in Zion.

1. They will hereafter be afraid. Now many of them seem to have little or no fear. They are quiet and secure.

Nothing will awaken them: The most awful threatenings and the loudest warnings do not much move them. They are not so much moved with them, but that they can eat, and drink, and sleep, and go about their worldly concerns without much disturbance. But the time will come, when the hardest and most stupid wretches will be awakened. Though now preaching will not awaken them, and the death of others will not make them afraid; though seeing others awakened and converted will not much affect them; though they can stand all that is to be heard and seen in a time of general outpouring of the Spirit of God, without being much moved; yet the time will come, when they will be awakened, and fear will take hold of them. They will be afraid of the wrath of God: However senseless they be now, they will hereafter be sensible of the awful greatness of God, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.

2. They will be surprised with fear. This seems to imply two things; viz. the greatness of their fear, and the suddenness of it.

(1.) The greatness of their fear. Surprise argues an high degree of fear. Their fears will be to the degree of astonishment. Some of the sinners in Zion are somewhat afraid now: They now and then have some degree of fear. They are not indeed convinced that there is such a place as hell; but they are afraid there is. They are not thoroughly awakened; neither are they quite easy. They have at certain times inward molestations from their consciences; but they have no such degrees of fear, as to put them upon any thorough endeavors to escape future wrath.

However, hereafter they will have fear enough, as much, and a great deal more than they will be able to stand under. Their fear will be to the degree of horror; they will be horribly afraid; and terrors will take hold on them as waters. Thus we read of "their fear coming as a desolation, and of distress and anguish coming upon them;" Prov. i. 27. It is also very emphatically said of the wicked, that "trouble and

anguish shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle." Job xv. 24.

The stoutest heart of them all will then melt with fear. The hearts of those who are of a sturdy spirit, and perhaps scorn to own themselves afraid of any man, and are even ashamed to own themselves afraid of the wrath of God, will then become as weak as water, as weak as the heart of a little child. And the most reserved of them will not be able to hide his fears. Their faces will turn pale; they will appear with amazement in their countenances; every joint in them will tremble; all their bones will shake; and their knees will smite one against another; nor will they be able to refrain from crying out with fear and rending the air with the most dismal shrieks.

(2.) They will be suddenly seized with fear. The sinners in Zion often remain secure, till they are surprised, as with a cry at midnight. They will be, as it were, awakened out of their secure sleep in a dismal fright. They will see an unexpected calamity coming upon them; far more dreadful than they were aware of, and coming at an unexpected season.

With respect to the time when the wicked shall be thus surprised with fear;

1. It is often so on a death bed. Many things pass in their life time, which one would think might well strike terror into their souls; as when they see others die, who are as young as they, and of like condition and circumstances with themselves, whereby they may see how uncertain their lives are, and how unsafe their souls. It may well surprise many sinners, to consider how old they are grown, and are yet in a Christless state; how much of their opportunity to get an interest in Christ is irrecoverably gone, and how little remains; also how much greater their disadvantages now are, than they have been. But these things do not terrify them: As age increases, so do the hardness and stupidity of their hearts grow upon them.

But when death comes, then the sinner is often filled with astonishment. It may be, when he is first taken sick, he has

great hope that he shall recover; as men are ready to flatter themselves with hopes, that things will be as they fain would have them. But when the distemper comes to prevail much upon him, and he sees that he is going into eternity; when he sees that all the medicines of physicians are in vain, that all the care and endeavors of friends are to no purpose, that nothing seems to help him, that his strength is gone, that his friends weep over him, and look upon his case as desperate; when he sees, by the countenance and behavior of the physician, that he looks upon his case as past hope, and perhaps overhears a whispering in the room, wherein his friends signify one to another, that they look upon it that he is struck with death, or wherein they tell one another, that his extreme parts grow cold, that his countenance and manner of breathing, and his pulse, show death, and that he begins to be in a cold death sweat; and when perhaps, by and by, some one thinks himself bound in duty and faithfulness to let him know the worst, and therefore comes and asks him whether or no he be sensible that he is a dying.....Then how doth fearfulness surprise the sinner in Zion! How doth his heart melt with fear! This is the thing which he feared ever since he was taken sick; but till now he had hope that he should recover. The physician did not speak; or if he despaired, he spoke of such and such medicines as being very proper; and he hoped that they would be effectual; and when these failed, he changed his medicines, and applied something new: Then the sinner hoped that that would be effectual. Thus, although he constantly grew worse and worse, still he hoped to recover.

At the same time he cried to God to spare him, and made promises how he would live, if God would spare him; and he hoped that God would hear him. He observed also that his friends, and perhaps the minister, seemed to pray earnestly for him; and he could not but hope that those prayers would be answered, and he should be restored. But now how doth his heart sink and die within him! How doth he look about with a frighted countenance! How quick is the motion of his

eye, through inward fear! And how quick and sudden are all his motions! What a frightful hurry doth he seem to be in! How doth every thing look to him when he sees pale grim death staring him in the face, and a vast eternity within a few hours or minutes of him!

It may be, he still struggles for a little hope; he is loth to believe what is told him; he tells those who tell him that he is a dying, that he hopes not; he hopes that they are more affrighted than they need be; he hopes that those symptoms arise from some other cause; and, like a poor drowning man, he catches at slender and brittle twigs, and clinches his hands about whatever he sees within his reach.

But as death creeps more and more on him, he sees his twigs break, all his hopes of life fail, and he sees he must die. O! there is nothing but death before him! He hath been hoping; but his hopes are all dashed; he sees this world, and all that belongs to it, are gone. Now come the thoughts of hell into his mind with amazement. O! how shall he go out of the world? He knows he hath no interest in Christ; his sins stare him in the face. O the dreadful gulf of eternity! He had been crying to God, perhaps since he was sick, to save him; and he had some hope, if it were his last sickness, that yet God would pity him, and give him pardoning grace before he should die. He begged and pleaded, and he hoped that God would have pity on his poor soul. At the same time he asked others to pray for him, and he had been looking day after day for some light to shine into his soul. But, alas! now he is a dying, and his friends ask him, how death appears to him? Whether any light appear? Whether God have not given him some token of his favor? And he answers, No, with a poor, faultering, trembling voice, if he be able to speak at all: Or if his friends ask a signal of hope, he can give none.

Now death comes on him more and more, and he is just on the brink of eternity. Who can express the fear, the misgivings, the hangings back, and the horrible fright and amazement, that his soul is the subject of? Some who, in such cir-

cumstances, have been able to speak, have been known to cry out, *O eternity! eternity!* And some, *O! a thousand worlds for an inch of time! O if they might but live a little while longer!* But it must not be; go they must. They feel the frame of nature dissolving, and perceive the soul is just a going; for sometimes the exercise of reason seems to hold to the last.

What, in such a case, is felt in the soul, in those last moments, when it is just breaking its bands with the body, about to fetch its leap, and is on the edge of eternity, and the very brink of hell, without any Saviour, or the least testimony of of divine mercy: I say, what is sometimes felt by Christless souls in these moments, none can tell; nor is it within the compass of our conception.

2. The misery of the departed soul of a sinner, besides what it now feels, consists in a great part in amazing fears of what is yet to come. When the union of the soul and body is actually broken, and the body has fetched its last gasp, the soul forsakes its old habitation, and then falls into the hands of devils, who fly upon it, and seize it more violently than ever hungry lions flew upon their prey. And with what horror will it fall into those cruel hands!

If we imagine to ourselves the dreadful fear with which a lamb or kid falls into the paws of a wolf, which lays hold of it with open mouth; or if we imagine to ourselves the feeling of a little child, that hath been pursued by a lion, when it is taken hold of, and sees the terrible creature open his devouring jaws to tear it in pieces; or the feeling of those two and forty children, who were cursed by Elisha, when they fell into the paws of the bears that tear them in pieces: I say, if we could have a perfect idea of that terror and astonishment which a little child has in such a case, yet we should have but a faint idea of what is felt in the departing soul of a sinner, when it falls into the hands of those cruel devils, those roaring lions, which then lay hold of it!

And when the poor soul is carried to hell, and there is tormented, and suffers the wrath of the Almighty, and is overwhelmed and crushed with it, it will also be amazed with the

apprehensions of what shall yet remain. To think of an eternity of this torment remaining, O how will it fill, and overbear, and sink down the poor soul! How will the thought of the duration of this torment without end cause the heart to melt like wax! How will the thought of it sink the soul into the bottomless pit of darkness and gloominess! Even those proud and sturdy spirits, the devils, do tremble at the thoughts of that greater torment which they are to suffer at the day of judgment. So will the poor damned souls of men. They will already have vastly more than they will be able to bear: How then will they tremble at the thought of having their misery so vastly augmented!

Persons sometimes in this world are afraid of the day of judgment. If there be an earthquake, or if there be more than common thunder and lightning, or if there be some unusual sight in the heavens, their hearts are ready to tremble for fear that the day of judgment is at hand. O how then do the poor souls in hell fear it, who know so much more about it, who know by what they feel already, and know certainly, that whenever it comes they shall stand on the left hand of the Judge, to receive the dreadful sentence; and that then they, in both soul and body, must enter into those everlasting burnings which are prepared for the devil and his angels, and who probably know that their misery is to be an hundred fold greater than it is now.

3. Fearfulness will surprise them at the last judgment. When Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and the last trumpet shall sound, then will the hearts of wicked men be surprised with fearfulness. The poor damned soul, in expectation of it, trembles every day and every hour from the time of its departure from the body. It knows not, indeed, when it is to be, but it knows it *is* to be. But when the alarm is given in hell, that the day is come, it will be a dreadful alarm indeed. It will, as it were, fill the caverns of hell with shrieks; and when the souls of the damned shall enter into their bodies, it will be with amazing horror of what is coming. And when they shall lift up their heads out of their graves,

and shall see the Judge, it will be a most terrible sight. Gladly would they return into their graves again, and hide themselves there, if that might be ; and gladly would they return into hell, their former state of misery, to hide themselves from this awful sight, if that would excuse them.

So those sinners in Zion, who shall then be found alive on the earth, when they shall see this sight, will be surprised with fearfulness. The fear and horror which many poor sinners feel when they are dying, is great, and beyond all that we can have any idea of; but that is nothing to the horror that will seize them when they shall come to see this sight.

There will not be a wicked man upon earth who will be able to bear it, let him be who he will, let him be rich or poor, old or young, male or female, servant or master, king or subject, learned or unlearned, let him be ever so proud, ever so courageous, and ever so sturdy. There is not one who will be able at all to support himself; when he shall see this sight, it will immediately sink his spirit ; it will loose the joints of his loins ; it will make his countenance more ghastly than death. The rich captains, and valiant generals and princes, who now scorn to show any fear at the face of any enemy, who scorn to tremble at the roaring of cannon, will tremble and shriek when they shall hear the last trumpet, and see the majesty of their Judge : It will make their teeth to chatter, and make them cry out, and fly to hide themselves in the caves and rocks of mountains, crying to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the Judge.

Fearfulness will surprise them when they shall be dragged before the judgment seat. The wicked hang back when they are about to meet death ; but in no measure as they will hang back when they come to meet their great Judge. And when they come to stand before the Judge, and are put on his left hand, fearfulness and amazement will surprise them. The majesty of the Judge will be intolerable to them. His pure and holy eye, which will behold and search them, and pierce them through, will be more terrible to their souls a

thousand times than flashes of lightning piercing their hearts. There will they stand in a trembling expectation, that by and by they shall hear the words of that dreadful sentence proceed out of the mouth of Christ: They will have an horrible expectation of that sentence; and what shall they do, whither shall they fly, so as to be out of the hearing of it? They cannot shut their ears, so as not to hear it.

Fearfulness will surprise them when the sentence shall come to be pronounced. At the close of the judgment, that dreadful doom will be uttered by the Judge, and it will be the most terrible voice that ever was heard. The sound of the last trumpet, that shall call men to judgment, will be a more terrible sound to wicked men than ever they shall have heard till that time. But the sound of the last sentence will be much more terrible than that. There will not be one of all those millions at the left hand, whether high or low, king or subject, who will be able to support himself at all under the sound of that sentence; but they will all sink under it.

Lastly, Fearfulness will surprise them, when they shall come to see the fire kindle upon the world, in which they are to be tormented forever. When the sentence shall have been pronounced, Christ, with his blessed saints and glorious angels, will leave this lower world, and ascend into heaven. Then will the flames begin to kindle, and fire will probably be seen coming down from heaven; and soon will the fire lay hold of that accursed multitude. Then will their hearts be surprised with fearfulness; that fire will appear a dreadful fire indeed. O what chatterings of teeth, what shakings of loins, what distortions of body, will there be at that time, when they shall see, and begin to feel, the fierceness of the flames! What shall they do, whither shall they go, to avoid those flames? Where shall they hide themselves? If they creep into holes, or creep into caves of the earth, yea if they could creep down to the centre of the earth, it will be in vain; for it will set on fire the bottoms of the mountains, and burn to the lowest hell. They will see no place to fly to, no place to hide themselves.

Then their hearts will be filled with fearfulness, and will utterly sink in despair. Thus it shall hereafter be with every one that shall then be found to be a sinner, and especially with sinners in Zion....I come now,

III. To consider those reasons spoken of in the text, why sinners in Zion will hereafter be thus surprised with fear.

1. Fearfulness will suprise them, because they will know that they are to be cast into devouring fire. There is nothing which seems to give one a more terrible idea of torment and misery, than to think of being cast alive into a fire ; especially if we conceive of the senses remaining quick, and not benumbed by the fire. The wicked will hereafter have that to make them afraid, that they are not only to be cast into a fire, but into devouring fire ; which implies, that it will be a fire of extraordinary fierceness of heat, and before which nothing can stand.

The fire into which men are to be cast is called a *furnace of fire*. Furnaces are contrived for an extreme degree of heat, this being necessary for the purposes for which they are designed, as the running and refining of metals, and the melting of things into glass. The fire of such earthly furnaces may be called *devouring fire*, as the heat of some of them is such, that in them even stones will presently be dissolved. Now, if a person should be brought to the mouth of such a furnace, and there should see how the fire glows, so as presently to make every thing cast into it, all over white and bright with fire, and at the same time should know that he was immediately to be cast into this furnace, would not fearfulness surprise him ?

In some Heathen countries, the manner of disposing of dead bodies is to dig a great pit, to put in it a great quantity of fuel, to put the dead bodies on the pile, and to set it on fire. This is some image of the burning of dead souls in the pit of hell. Now, if a person were brought to the edge of such a pit, all filled with glowing flames, to be immediately cast into it, would it not surprise the heart with fearfulness ?

The flames of a very great fire, as when an house is all on fire, give one some idea of the fierceness of the wrath of God: Such is the rage of the flames. And we see that the greater a fire is, the fiercer is its heat in every part; and the reason is, because one part heats another. The heat in a particular place, besides the heat which proceeds out of the fuel in that place, is increased by the additional heat of the fire all around it. Hence we may conceive something of what fierceness that fire will be, when this visible world shall be turned into one great furnace. That will be devouring fire indeed. Such will be the heat of it, that, as the apostle says, "the elements shall melt with fervent heat," 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Men can artificially raise such a degree of heat with burning glasses, as will quickly melt the very stones and sand. And it is probable that the heat of that great fire which will burn the world, will be such as to melt the rocks, and the very ground, and turn them into a kind of liquid fire: So that the whole world will probably be converted into a great lake, or liquid globe of fire, a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked shall be overwhelmed. It will be an ocean of fire, which will always be in a tempest, in which the wicked shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day nor night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads.

But all this will be only an image of that dreadful fire of the wrath of God, which the wicked shall at the same time suffer in their souls. We read in Rev. xix. 15, of "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." This is an extraordinary expression, carrying a terrible idea of the future misery of the wicked. If it had been only said the wrath of God, that would have expressed what is dreadful. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, what is the wrath of God? But it is not only said the wrath of God, but *the fierceness and wrath of God*, or the rage of his wrath; and not only so, but the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. O what is that! The fierceness and rage or fury of Omnipotence! Of a Being of infinite strength! What an idea doth that give of the state of those worms that suffer the fierceness and wrath of such an

Almighty Being! And is it any wonder that fearfulness surprises their hearts, when they see this about to be executed upon them?

2. Another reason given in the text, why fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners, is, that they will be sensible that this devouring fire will be everlasting. If a man were brought to the mouth of a great furnace, to be cast into the midst of it, if at the same time he knew he should suffer the torment of it but for one minute, yet that minute would be so terrible to him, that fearfulness would surprise and astonish him. How much more, if he were to be cast into a fire so much fiercer, as the fire in which wicked men are hereafter to be tormented! How much more terrible would the minute's suffering be!

But if the thought of suffering this devouring fire for one minute would be enough to fill one with such surprising fearfulness, what fearfulness will seize them, when they shall know that they are to bear it, not for one minute, nor for one day, nor for one year, nor for one age, nor for two ages, nor for an hundred ages, nor for ten thousand or million ages, one after another, but for ever and ever, without any end at all, and never, never be delivered!

They shall know, that the fire itself will be everlasting fire, fire that shall never be quenched. Mark ix. 43, 44. "To go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And they shall know that their torment in that fire never will have an end, Rev. xiv. 10, 11. They shall know that they shall for ever be full of quick sense within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins, and their vitals, shall for ever be full of glowing, melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements; and also that they shall eternally be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torment.

They shall know that they shall never cease restlessly to plunge and roll in that mighty ocean of fire. They shall know that those billows of fire, which are greater than the greatest

mountains, will never cease to roll over them, are following one another for ever and ever.

At the same time they will have a more lively sense of eternity than we ever can have here. We can have but a little sense of what an eternal duration is; and indeed none can comprehend it; it swallows up all thought and imagination: If we set ourselves to think upon it, we are presently lost. But they will have another and far clearer sense of it than we have. O how vast will eternity appear to them, when they think of spending it in such burnings! This is another reason that fearfulness will surprise them. The thoughts of eternity will always amaze them, and will sink and depress them to a bottomless depth of despair.

3. The third reason given in the text, why fearfulness will surprise them at the apprehension of this punishment, is, that they will know that they shall not be able to bear it. When they shall see themselves going into that devouring fire, they will know that they are not able to bear it. They will know that they are not able to grapple with the fierceness and rage of those flames; for they will see the fierceness of the wrath of God in them; they will see an awful manifestation of Omnipotence in the fury of that glowing furnace. And in those views their hearts will utterly fail them; their hands will not be strong, nor their hearts endure. They will see that their strength is weakness; they will know that they will not be able to grapple with such torments, and that they can do nothing in such a conflict.

When they shall have come to the edge of the pit, and of the burning lake, and shall look into the furnace, then they will cry out with exclamations like these: O! what shall I do? How shall I bear the torments of this fire? How can I endure them? Who can endure? Where is the man so stout-hearted, where is the giant of such strength and such courage, that he can bear this? O! what shall I do? Must I be cast in thither? I cannot bear it; I can never endure it. O that I could return to my first nothing! How can I endure it one moment? How much less can I endure it for ever and

ever? And must I bear it forever? What! Forever and ever, without any end, and never find any refuge, never be suffered to return to my first nothing, and be no nearer to the end of these sufferings after millions of ages? O what dismal shrieks, and shaking of loins, and gnashing of teeth, will there be then! No wonder that fearfulness willthen surprise the wicked.

I come now,

IV. To show, why it will be especially thus with the sinners in Zion, or sinners that dwell among God's visible people, who sit under the preaching of the gospel, and have the offers of a Saviour, and yet accept not of him, but remain in an unconverted state.

There will hereafter be a very great difference between them and other sinners; a great difference between the most painted hypocrite of them all, and the drunkards, the adulterers, the Sodomites, the thieves, and murderers among the Heathen, who sin against only the light of nature. The fearfulness which will surprise them, although it will be very dreadful, yet will be in no measure so amazing and horrible, as that which will seize the sinners in Zion. That fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, which they will suffer, will be mild and moderate in comparison with that which the sinners in Zion will suffer.

The wrath of God is in his word manifested against the wicked Heathens; but it is ten times as much manifested against those sinners who make the profession and enjoy the privileges of the people of God; and yet remain enemies to God. Both the Old Testament and the New are full of terrible denunciations against such. Read the books of Moses, and read the prophets, and you will find them full of dreadful threatenings against such. Read over the history of Christ's life, and the speeches which he made when upon earth; there you will see what woes and curses he frequently denounced against such. How often did he say, that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment,

than for the cities in which most of his mighty works were done! Read over the history of the Acts of the Apostles, and their epistles; there you will find the same. It is the sinners in Zion, or hypocrites, that are always in scripture spoken of as the people of God's wrath: Isa. x. 6. "I will send him against an hypocritical nation, against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil."

Now, the reasons of this are chiefly these:

1. That they sin against so much greater light. This is often spoken of in scripture, as an aggravation to the sin and wickedness of sinners in Zion. He that knows not his Lord's will, and doeth it not, is declared not to be worthy of so many stripes, as he who, being informed of his Lord's will, is in like manner disobedient. If men be blind, they have comparatively no sin; but when they see, when they have light to know their duty, and to know their obligation, then their sin is great, John ix. 41. When the light that is in a man is darkness, how great is that darkness! And when men live in wickedness, in the midst of great light, that light is like to be the blackness of darkness indeed.

2. That they sin against such professions and vows. The Heathens never pretended to be the worshippers of the true God. They never pretended to be Christ's disciples; they never came under any covenant obligations to be such. But this is not the case with sinners in Zion. Now, God highly resents falsehood and treachery. Judas, who betrayed Christ with a kiss, was a greater sinner, and much more the object of God's wrath, than Pilate, who condemned him to be crucified, and was his murderer.

3. That they sin against so much greater mercy. They have the infinite mercy of God, in giving his own Son, often set before them: They have the dying love of Christ represented to them: They have this mercy, this glorious Saviour, his blood and righteousness, often offered to them: They have a blessed opportunity to obtain salvation for their souls; a great price is put into their hands to this end: They have

that precious treasure, the holy scriptures, and enjoy Sabbaths, and sacraments, and the various means of grace: But all these means and advantages, these opportunities, offers, mercies, and invitations, they abuse, neglect, despise, and reject.

But there is no wrath like that which arises from mercy abused and rejected. When mercy is in this way turned into wrath, this is the fiercest wrath; in comparison with this, other wrath is cool.

Sinners in Zion, beside their fall by the first Adam, have a fall also by the second: He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, at which they stumble and fall; and there is no fall like this; the fall by the first Adam is light in comparison with it.

On these accounts, whenever we see the day of judgment, as every one of us shall see it, we shall easily distinguish between the sinners in Zion and other sinners, by their shriller cries, their louder, more bitter, and dolorous shrieks, the greater amazement of their countenances, and the more dismal shaking of their limbs, and contortions of their bodies.

I shall conclude with an earnest EXHORTATION to sinners in Zion, now to fly from the devouring fire and everlasting burnings.

You sinners who are here present, you are the very persons spoken of in the text; you are the sinners in Zion. How many of these people of God's wrath are there sitting here and there in the seats of this house at this time? You have often been exhorted to fly from the wrath to come. This devouring fire, these everlasting burnings, of which we have been speaking, are the wrath to come. You hear to day of this fire, of these burnings, and of that fearfulness which will seize and surprise sinners in Zion hereafter; and O what reason have you of thankfulness that you only hear of them, that you do not as yet feel them, and that they have not already taken hold of you! They are, as it were, following you, and coming nearer and nerer every day. Those fierce flames are, as it were, already kindled in the wrath of God; yea, the

fierceness and wrath of Almighty God burn against you; it is ready for you: That pit is prepared for you, with fire and much wood, and the wrath of the Lord, as a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Lot was with great urgency hastened out of Sodom, and commanded to make haste, and fly for his life, and escape to the mountains, lest he should be consumed in those flames which burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. But that burning was a mere spark to that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, of which you are in danger. Therefore improve the present opportunity.

Now, God is pleased again to pour out his spirit upon us; and he is doing great things among us. God is indeed come again, the same great God who so wonderfully appeared among us some years ago, and who hath since, for our sins, departed from us, left us so long in so dull and dead a state, and hath let sinners alone in their sins; so that there have been scarcely any signs to be seen of any such work as conversion: That same God is now come again; he is really come in like manner, and begins, as he did before, gloriously to manifest his mighty power, and the riches of his grace. He brings sinners out of darkness into marvellous light. He rescues poor captive souls out of the hands of Satan; he saves persons from the devouring fire; he plucks one and another as brands out of the burnings; he opens the prison doors, and knocks off their chains, and brings out poor prisoners; he is now working salvation among us from this very destruction of which you have now heard.

Now, now, then, is the time, now is the blessed opportunity to escape those everlasting burnings. Now God hath again set open the same fountain among us, and gives one more happy opportunity for souls to escape. Now he hath set open a wide door, and he stands in the door way, calling and begging with a loud voice to the sinners of Zion: Come, saith he to me, come, fly from the wrath to come; here is a refuge for you; fly hither for refuge; lay hold on the hope set before you.

A little while ago, it was uncertain whether we should ever see such an opportunity again. If it had always continued as it hath been for five or six years past, almost all of you would surely have gone to hell; in a little time fearfulness would have surprised you, and you would have been cast into that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings. But in infinite mercy God gives another opportunity; and blessed are your eyes, that they see it, if you did but know your own opportunity.

You have had your life spared through these six years past, to this very time, to another outpouring of the Spirit. What would you have done, if you had died before it came? How doleful would your case have been! But you have reason to bless God that it was not so, and that you are yet alive, and now again see a blessed day of grace. And will you not improve it! Have you not so much love to your poor souls, as to improve such an opportunity as this?

Some, there is reason to think, have lately fled for refuge to Christ; and will you be willing to stay behind still, poor miserable captives, condemned to suffer for ever in the lake of fire? Hereafter you will see those of your neighbors and acquaintance, who are converted, mounting up as with wings, with songs of joy, to meet their Lord; and if you remain unconverted, you at the same time will be surprised with fear, and horror will take hold of you, because of the devouring fire, and the everlasting burnings.

It is an awful thing to think of, that there are now some persons in this very congregation, here and there, in one seat and another, who will be the subjects of that very misery of which we have now heard, although it be so dreadful, although it be so intolerable, and although it be eternal! There are probably some now hearing this sermon, whom the rest of the congregation will, at the day of judgment, see among the devils, at the left hand of the Judge. They will see their frighted ghastly countenances; they will see them wring their hands, and gnash their teeth, shrieking and crying out.

Now we know not their names, we know not what seats they sit in, nor where to look for them, nor whom to pitch upon. But God knoweth their names, and now seeth and knoweth what they think, and how much they regard the warnings which are given them this day. We have not the least reason to suppose any other than that some of you will hereafter see others entering into glory with Christ, and saints, and angels, while you, with dreadful horror, shall see the fire begin to kindle about you. It may be, that the persons are now blessing themselves in their own hearts, and each one saying with himself, Well, I do not intend it shall be I. Every one here hopes to go to heaven; none would by any means miss of it. If any thought they should miss of it, they would be greatly amazed. But all will not go thither; it will undoubtedly be the portion of some to toss and tumble for ever among the fiery billows of God's wrath.

It is not to be supposed, but that there are some here who will not be in earnest; let them have ever so good an opportunity to obtain heaven, they will not thoroughly improve it. Tell them of hell as often as you will, and set it out in as lively colors as you will, they will be slack and slothful; and they will never be likely to obtain heaven, while they are sleeping, and dreaming, and intending, and hoping. The wrath of God, which pursues them, will take them by the heels; hell, that follows after, will overtake them; fearfulness will surprise them, and a tempest will steal them away.

Nor is it to be supposed, that all who are now seeking will hold out; some will backslide; they will be unsteady. If now they seem to be pretty much engaged, it will not hold. Times will probably alter by and by, and they, having not obtained grace, there will be many temptations to backsliding, with which they will comply. The hearts of men are very unsteady; they are not to be trusted. Men cannot tell how to have patience to wait upon God; they are soon discouraged. Some that are now under convictions may lose them. Perhaps they will not leave off seeking salvation at once; but they will come to it by degrees. After a while, they will be-

gin to hearken to excuses, not to be quite so constant in duty; they will begin to think that they need not be quite so strict; they will say to themselves, they see no hurt in such and such things; they see not but they may practise them without any, or to be sure, great guilt. Thus giving way to temptations, and hearkening to excuses, they will by degrees lose their convictions, and become secure in sin.

There were some who were guilty of backsliding, the last time of the revival of religion among us. While the talk upon religious subjects was generally kept alive, they continued to seek; but when this began to abate, and they saw others less zealous than they had been, and especially when they saw some miscarriages of professors, they began to grow more careless, to seek less earnestly, and to plead these things as an excuse. And they are left behind still; they are to this day in a miserable condemned state, in danger of the devouring fire, and of everlasting burnings; in twice so dangerous a state as they were in before they were awakened; and God only knows what will become of them. And as it was then, so we dread it will be now.

Some who are now here present in a natural condition, are doubtless near death; they have not long to live in the world; and if they seek in a dull way, or if after they have sought for a while, they are guilty of backsliding, death will come upon them long enough before there will come such another opportunity. When they leave off seeking, it will not be without a design of seeking again some time or other; but death will be too quick for them. It is not the manner of death to wait upon men, while they take time to indulge their sloth, and gratify their lusts. When his appointed time comes, he will do his work. Will you put off in hopes of seeing another such time seven years hence? Alas! how many of those who are now in a natural condition may be in hell before another seven years shall have elapsed!

Therefore now let every one look to himself. It is for your own soul's salvation. If you be foolish, and will not hearken to counsel, will not improve the opportunity when it

is given you, and will not enter into such an open door, you alone must bear it. If you shall miss this opportunity, and quench your convictions now, and there shall come another time of the outpouring of the Spirit, you will be far less likely to have any profit by it; as we see now God chiefly moves on the hearts of those who are very young, who are brought forward upon the stage of action since the last outpouring of the Spirit, who were not then come to years of so much understanding, and consequently not so much in the way of the influences of the Spirit. As to those who were grown up, and had convictions then, and quenched them, the most of these are abundantly more hardened, and seem to be more passed over. So it will probably be with you hereafter, if you miss this opportunity, and quench the convictions of the Spirit which you have now.

As to you who had awakenings the last time of the outpouring of the Spirit, and have quenched them, and remain to this day in a natural condition, let me call upon you also now that God is giving you one more such opportunity. If passing in impenitence through one such opportunity hath so hardened you, and hath been such a great disadvantage to you, how sad will your case be, if you shall now miss another! Will you not now thoroughly awake out of sleep, bestir yourselves for your salvation, and resolve now to begin again, and never leave off more? Many fled for refuge from the devouring fire before, and you were left behind. Others have fled for refuge now, and still you are left behind; and will you always remain behind? Consider, can you dwell with devouring fire? Can you dwell with everlasting burnings? Shall children, babes and sucklings, go into the kingdom of God before you?

How will you hereafter bear to see them coming and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, when yourselves are thrust out, and are surprised with fearfulness at the sight of that devouring fire, and those everlasting burnings, into which you are about to be cast? Take heed lest a like threatening be fulfilled upon you with that which we have in Numb. xiv. 22, 23. "Because all those

men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." Together with verse 31. "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."

SERMON XXIII.

The Sin and Folly of depending on Future Time.

PROVERBS xxvii. 1.

BOAST NOT THYSELF OF TOMORROW; FOR THOU KNOWEST NOT WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH.

THE design of the wise man in this book of Proverbs, is to give us the precepts of true wisdom, or to teach us how to conduct ourselves wisely in the course of our lives. Wisdom very much consists in making a wise improvement of time, and of the opportunities we enjoy. This is often in scripture spoken of, as a great part of true wisdom; as Deut. xxxii. 29. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" And, Psalm xc. 12. "Teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." So the wisdom of the wise virgins is represented as consisting much in this, that they improved the proper season to buy oil.

Therefore the wise man in these books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, agreeably to his design, insists on this part of wisdom. He tells us the advantage of seeking Christ early:

Prov. viii. 17. And advises us TO DO WHAT OUR HAND FINDETH TO DO, WITH OUR MIGHT: Eccles. ix. 10. He advises young people to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, while the evil days come not, in which they shall say they have no pleasure; Eccles. xii. 1. So here in the text he advises us to a wise improvement of the present season..... In the words are two things to be particularly observed.

1. The precept NOT TO BOAST OF TOMORROW; i. e. not to speak or act as though it were our own. It is absurd for men to boast of that which is not their own. The wise man would not have us behave ourselves as though any time were ours but the present. He that boasts of tomorrow, acts as though he had tomorrow in his possession, or had something whereby he might depend on it, and call it his own.

2. The reason given for this precept; FOR THOU KNOWEST NOT WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH. It is a good reason why we should not behave ourselves as though the morrow were our own, that indeed it is not our own; we are not sure of it; we have no hold of future time; we know not whether we shall see the morrow: Or if we do know that we shall see it, we know not what we shall see on it.

DOCTRINE.

We ought to behave ourselves every day as though we had no dependence on any other day.

In handling this doctrine, I shall (1.) briefly say something which may be needful to prevent misunderstanding. (2.) Show what is implied in this doctrine. (3.) Show when men behave themselves, as if they had dependence on another day. (4.) Show why this should be avoided.

I. To prevent a misunderstanding of the doctrine, I observe to you, that it is not meant, that we should in every respect behave as though we knew or concluded that we should

not live another day. Not depending on another day, is a different thing from concluding, that we shall not live another day. We may have reason for the one, and not for the other. We have good reason not to depend on another day, but we have no reason to conclude, that we shall not live another day. We may have no reason to depend upon another day, and so that may be one extreme. On the other hand, neither may we have any reason to depend upon it that we shall not enjoy another day, and therefore that may be another extreme.

In some respects we ought to carry ourselves, as though we knew we should not live another day, and should improve every day as if it were the last. Particularly, we should live every day as conscientiously and as holily as if we knew it were the last. We should be as careful every day to avoid all sin, as if we knew that that night our souls should be required of us. We should be as careful to do every duty which God requires of us, and take as much care that we have a good account to give to our Judge, of our improvement of that day, as if we concluded that we must be called to give an account before another day.

But in many other respects, we are not obliged to behave ourselves as though we concluded that we should not live to another day. If we had reason to conclude that we should not live another day, some things would not be our duty which now are our duty. As for instance, in such a case it would not be the duty of any person to make provision for his temporal subsistence during another day: To neglect which, as things now are, would be very imprudent and foolish, as the consequences would show, if every man were to act in this manner; at this rate the whole world would presently murder itself.

If so, it would never be man's duty to plow or sow the field, or to lay up for winter; but these things are man's duty; as Prov. vi. 6. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: Which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." And chap. x. 5. &c. "He that gather-

eth in summer is a wise son ; but he that sleepeth in harvest, is a son that causeth shame." And many other places might be mentioned.

So, on the other hand, if we were certain that we should not live another day, some things would be our duty today, which now are not so. As for instance, it would be proper for us to spend our time in giving our dying counsels, and in setting our houses in order. If it were revealed to us, that we should die before tomorrow morning, we ought to look upon it as a call of God to us, to spend the short remainder of our lives in those things which immediately concern our departure, more than otherwise it would be our duty to do.

But the words of the text, which forbid us to boast of tomorrow, cannot be extended so far as to signify, that we ought in all respects to live, as if we knew we should not see another day. Yet they undoubtedly mean, that we ought not to behave ourselves in any respect, as though we depended on another day.

I now proceed,

II. To show what is implied in the precept, *Boast not thyself of tomorrow*, or in behaving ourselves every day as though we had no dependence on any other day. In this precept two things seem to be forbidden.

1. Boasting ourselves of what shall be on the morrow, or behaving ourselves as though we depended on particular things to come to pass in this world, in some future time. As when men behave themselves, as though they depended on being rich, or promoted to honor hereafter ; or as though they were sure of accomplishing any particular design another day. So did the rich man in the gospel, when he did not only promise himself, that he should live many years, but promised himself also, that he should be rich many years. Hence he said to his soul, that *he had much goods laid up for many years*.

And if men act as though they depended upon it, that they should another day accomplish such and such things for their souls, then may they be said to boast themselves of to-

morrow, and not to behave themselves as though they depended on no other day. As when they behave themselves, as though they depended upon it, that they should at another day have such and such advantages for the good of their souls; that they should at another day have the strivings of God's spirit; that they should at another day find themselves disposed to be thorough in seeking their salvation; that they should at another day have a more convenient season; and that God at another day would stand ready to hear their prayers, and show them mercy.

Or if they act as though they depended upon it that they should have considerable opportunity on a death bed to seek mercy; or whatever they promise themselves shall come to pass respecting them in this world, if they act as depending on it, they boast themselves of tomorrow.

2. Another thing implied, is our boasting of future time itself, or acting as though we depended on it, that we should have our lives continued to see another day. Not only is the command of God delivered in the text transgressed by those who behave themselves as depending upon it, that they shall see and obtain such and such things tomorrow; but by those who act as depending upon it, that they shall remain in being in this world tomorrow.

Both these ways of boasting of tomorrow are reproved by the Apostle James, chapter iv. 13. "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain." By promising themselves that they shall do such and such things, and that they shall get gain, they boast themselves of what shall come to pass in such a time. The apostle in the next verse teaches them, that they ought not to do this, no nor so much as depend upon seeing another day, or on having their lives continued. Verse 14. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." And in verse 15, he teaches us that both are uncertain and dependent on the will of God, viz. Whether we shall live another day, and

if we do, whether such and such things shall come to pass? "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." Therefore he adds in verse 16. "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: All such rejoicing is evil."

I come now,

III. To show more particularly, when men act as though they depended on another day.

1. They will do so, if they set their hearts on the enjoyments of this life. I mean not, if they have any manner of affection to them. We may have some affection to the enjoyments of this world; otherwise they would cease to be enjoyments. If we might have no degree of rejoicing in them, we could not be thankful for them. Persons may in a degree take delight in earthly friends, and other earthly enjoyments. It is agreeable to the wise man's advice that we should do so. Eccles. v. 18. "It is good and comely for one to eat and to drink and to enjoy the good of all his labor that he taketh under the sun."

But by setting our hearts on these things, by placing our happiness in them, and letting out the current of our affections after them, by turning and fixing our inclinations so much upon them, that we cannot well enjoy ourselves without them, so that very much of the strength of the faculties of our minds is employed and taken up about these things, we show that we have our dependence on another day.

The man who doth thus, acts as though he depended on another day, yea many other days, in the world: For it is most evident, that if the enjoyments of this world be of such a nature that they are not to be depended on for one day more, they are not worth the setting of our hearts upon them, or the placing of our happiness in them. We may rejoice in the enjoyments of the world, but not in such a manner as to place the rest of our souls in them. As the apostle saith, we should rejoice in them, as though we rejoiced not, 1 Cor. vii. 30. So that if this joy should fail, our stock may hold good; and in this case we must behave ourselves only as if

we had lost a small stream of joy, but still had the fountain in full possession. We should conduct ourselves as those who have not the foundation of their joy shaken, though some appurtenances have failed. Our happiness as to the body of it, if I may so speak, should yet stand as on an immoveable foundation.

They who exceedingly rejoice, and are very much pleased and elated with the enjoyments of the world, certainly behave themselves as though they had much dependence on their continuance for more than one or two days more.

They that addict themselves to vain mirth, and lead a jovial life, show that they set their hearts on the enjoyments of the world, and act as those who depend on more days than the present. For if they were sensible that they could not depend on any future time, but that death would put an eternal end to all their carnal mirth before tomorrow, they would have no heart to spend the present day in such a manner as they now do. It would immediately produce in them a sober solid disposition, far from levity and vanity.

And when persons are very much sunk with the loss of any temporal enjoyments, or with any temporal disappointments, it shows that they set their hearts upon them, and behave as though they boasted of tomorrow, and depended on their longer continuance in life. If they had no such dependence, they would not be frustrated in their dependence; or they would not be overwhelmed by their frustration. If they be very much sunk, and the comfort of their lives be destroyed by it, it shows that those temporal enjoyments were too much the foundation on which their comfort stood. That which makes a building totter, and threatens its destruction, is not the taking away of some of the exterior parts of the superstructure, but the removal of some considerable part of the foundation on which the house stands.

2. If men are proud of their worldly circumstances, it shows that they have a dependence on tomorrow; for no man would think it worth his while to vaunt himself in that which is to be depended on only for a day. Though a man have a

great estate today, he will not be puffed up with it, unless he depend upon having it tomorrow. A man who hath no dependence on any other but that he may tomorrow be in the grave, where the small and great are upon a level, Job iii. 19, will not be much lifted up with his advancement to a post of honor.

That person will not be proud of his rich and fine clothes, who is sensible that he cannot depend upon it, that he shall not be stripped by death tomorrow, and sent naked out of the world, as he came naked into it. He will not today be very proud of his personal beauty, who hath no dependence on escaping tomorrow that stroke of death which will mar all his beauty, and make that face which he now thinks so comely, appear ghastly and horrid; when, instead of a ruddy and florid countenance, there will be blood settled, cold and congealed, flesh stiff and clayey, teeth set, eyes fixed and sunk into the head. Nor will he today very much affect to beautify and adorn with gaudy and flaunting apparel, that body concerning which he is sensible that he can have no dependence that it will not be wrapped in a winding sheet tomorrow, to be carried to the grave, there to rot, and to be covered and filled with worms.

3. So when men envy others their worldly enjoyments, their wealth, or their worldly ease, or their titles and high places, or envy them their sensual pleasures, or any of their worldly circumstances, it shows that they set their hearts on the things of the world; and that they are not sensible that these things are not to be depended upon for another day. If they were, they would not think them worth their envy. They would appear so worthless in their eyes, that they would not care who had them, nor who went without them.

So when they contend about worldly possessions and enjoyments (as almost all the contentions that are in the world are about these things) it shows that they have dependence on tomorrow; otherwise they would not think the enjoyments of the world worth the contending about. They would be very much of the temper recommended by Jesus Christ, Matth. v.

40. "He that will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

4. Men behave themselves as if they depended on another day, when they rest and are easy today, in a condition out of which they must be delivered before they die. When a man's mind is at ease and rest, there is something that he rests in; that rest must have some foundation, either real or imaginary. But if the man be in a condition from which he is sensible he must some time or other be delivered, or be undone, it is impossible that he should rest in the thoughts of remaining in his condition always, and never being delivered from it; for no man is willing to be ruined; no man can rest in that which he conceives to be connected with his own misery and undoing.

Therefore, if he rest in such a condition for the present, it must be on a supposition, that he shall be delivered from it. If he rest in it today, it must be because he depends on being delivered another day, and therefore depends on seeing another day.

We in this land generally profess, that as we are by nature, we are exposed to eternal death, and that therefore there is a necessity that we get out of a natural condition some time before we die. And those among us who are sensible that they have never passed through any such change as in scripture is called a being born again, though they be not sufficiently convinced that there is any such place as hell, yet have a kind of belief of it; at least they do not conclude, that there is no such place, and therefore cannot but be sensible that it would be dreadful to die unconverted. Therefore, if they be in a considerable degree of ease and quietness in the condition they are in, it must be because they have a dependence on being delivered out of such a condition some time before they die.

In as much as they are easy in remaining in such a condition today, without any prospect of present deliverance, it shows plainly that they depend on another day. If they did not, they could have no manner of ease or quietness in their

spirits in remaining in a natural condition to the end of the present day ; because, if there be no grounds of dependence on any further opportunity than what they have today, then what they are exposed to, by missing the opportunity which they have today, is infinitely dreadful.

Persons who are secure in their sins, under the light of the gospel, unless they be deceived with a false hope, are generally so because they boast themselves of tomorrow.... They depend on future opportunity ; they flatter themselves with hopes of living long in the world ; they depend on what shall come to pass hereafter ; they depend on the fulfilment of their good intentions as to what they will do at a more convenient season.

5. Men behave themselves as those who depend on another day, when they neglect any thing today which must be done before they die. If there be any thing, let it be what it will, which is absolutely necessary to be done some time before death, and the necessity of it be sufficiently declared and shown to the person for whom it is thus necessary, if he neglect setting about it immediately, sincerely, and with all his might, certainly it carries this face with it, that the man depends upon its being done hereafter, and consequently that he shall have opportunity to do it.

Because, as to those things which are absolutely necessary to be done, there is need, not only of a possibility of a future opportunity, but of something which is to be depended on, some good ground to conclude that we shall have future opportunity ; therefore, whoever lives under the gospel, that doth not now this day thoroughly reform his life, by casting away every abomination, and denying every lust, and doth not this day also apply himself to the practice of the whole of his duty towards God and towards man, and doth not now begin to make religion his main business, he acts as one who depends on another day ; because he is abundantly taught that these things must be done before he dies.

So those who have been seeking salvation for a great while, in a dull, insincere, and slighty manner, and find no good ef-

fect of it, have abundant reason to conclude, that some time before they die, they must alter their hand, and must not only seek, but strive, to enter in at the strait gate, and must be violent for the kingdom of heaven; and therefore, if they do not begin thus to change their hand today, they act as those who depend on another day.

So those who have hitherto lived in the neglect of some particular known duty, whether it be the duty of secret prayer, or the duty of paying some old debt, which they have long owed to their neighbor, or the duty of confessing some fault to a brother who hath ought against them, or the duty of making restitution for some injury which they have done their neighbor, they act as those who depend on another day.

6. Men behave themselves as though they depended on another day, if they do that today which some time or other must be undone. There are many things done by men which must be undone by them. They must go back again from the way which they have gone, or they are ruined to all eternity. Therefore, in doing these things, they act as those who depend on future opportunity to undo them: As when a man cheats or defrauds his neighbor in any thing, he acts as one that boasts of tomorrow; for he must undo what he doth before he dies; he must some time or other make restitution, or divine justice, which oversees all things, and governs the whole world, and will see to it that right be done, will not let go its hold of him.

So when men hearken to temptation, and yield to the solicitations of their lusts to commit any sin, they act as those who depend on another day. They do what must be undone. What they then do must be undone by hearty and thorough repentance, or they are ruined and lost forever. The morsel they swallowed down, they must vomit up again So if persons have been seeking salvation for a time, and then afterwards are guilty of backsliding, and turn back after their hands have been put to the plough, they act as those who depend on another day. For what they now do, they must undo some time or other; they must go back again from their

backsliding, and have all their work to do over again. And these things must be undone in this world, while men live; for there will be no undoing of them afterwards; they may be suffered for, but never can be undone.

I come now,

IV. To show why we ought not thus to boast ourselves of tomorrow; but, on the contrary, to behave ourselves every day as though we had no dependence on another day. And there is this plain and sufficient REASON for it, viz. That we have no grounds of dependence on another day. We have neither any foundation to depend upon seeing any particular things come to pass another day, which we may hope or wish for, nor upon enjoying another day here in this world. We have nothing for a foundation of dependence that we shall not be in eternity before another day, as both reason and experience show.

We have no promise of God that we shall ever see another day. We are in God's hands; our lives are in his hands; he hath set our bounds; the number of our months and days is with him; nor hath he told them to us. We see that the life of man at longest is very short, and that nothing is more uncertain; and it is a thing universal among mankind, that they know not the day of their death. We see that great natural abilities, and sharpness of wit, and clearness of discernment, do not help to any discovery in this matter. But wise and discerning men are as uncertain of the term of their lives as others.

There are so many ways and means whereby the lives of men come to an end, that no circumstances in which a man can be are any security to him from death. That it is but a very little while till tomorrow, is no good ground of dependence that we shall live till then. We see that deaths as sudden as our dying before tomorrow morning, are common in the world. We very often see or hear of sudden deaths. How many suddenly, in a few minutes, pass from a state of health to a state of death, in the day time, by several kinds of disease,

which give no warning of their approach, and by many unforeseen accidents! How many go to bed, and to sleep, in health, and are found dead in their beds in the morning! So that our present health is no good ground of dependence that we shall live to see another day.

That persons are now in youth, is no good ground of dependence upon another day; for sudden, unexpected deaths are common even among those who are in the bloom of youth. Nor is it any ground of dependence in this case, that a man is of a more than ordinary healthy and strong constitution. It is found by experience, that such are liable to sudden death as well as others. Job xxi. 23. "One dieth in his full strength. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow."

That persons have already lived to see a great many days, and that after they had been often in times past told, that they were uncertain of any future time; or that persons have a strong desire to live longer; or that they are now very unprepared for death, both on temporal and spiritual accounts; is no ground of dependence on another day. Death tarries for no man, but comes when and to whom he is sent, and strikes the deadly blow, whether the man be prepared or not.

Again, that men have been very useful in their day, and that it is of great importance to their families and neighbors that they should live longer, is no ground of dependence. The most useful men are often cut down by death, in the midst of their usefulness. The same may be said, though we cannot see which way death should come at us before tomorrow. To how many accidents, to how many diseases are we liable, which may prove fatal before tomorrow, which yet it is impossible for us to foresee! So, if we be very careful of our lives, and our health, not to expose ourselves to any dangers, still this is no ground of dependence as to any future time. Death comes in many ways which were not thought of. Men foresee not the means of their death, any more than the fish securely swimming in the water foresees the net, or the bird that securely feeds upon the bait sees the snare. It is as the

wise man observes, in Eccles. ix. 12. "For man also knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them."

IMPROVEMENT.

I. I shall improve this doctrine, by putting you all upon examining yourselves, whether you do not boast yourselves of to-morrow, or whether you do not live in such a manner as you would not, were it not that you depend on future time and future opportunity in the world. Would not your behavior be very different from what it now is, if you every day lived and acted without any dependence on seeing one day more?

You cannot but acknowledge, every one of you, that it is most reasonable that you should live and act thus. If you should be particularly inquired of, you would doubtless own, and you cannot but own, that you have no good ground of dependence on another day; and therefore that you cannot act wisely any otherwise than in acting as one who hath no dependence on any such thing. Therefore inquire whether you act wisely and reasonably in this respect.

1. Do you not set your hearts much more on this world, than you would, if you had no dependence on the morrow? Is not the language of the rich man in the gospel, the secret language of your hearts? "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years," &c. Is not this the language of your hearts, with respect to what you have gotten already; which makes you place your happiness so much in it? And with respect to what of the world you are seeking and pursuing, is it not with a dependence on enjoying it for a great while, when you shall have obtained it? Are not your lands and other possessions which you have gotten, or about to get, in your own imagination, your's for a great while?

Would your mind be so filled up with thoughts and cares about these things, so much to the crowding out of things of another world? Would you lay yourselves under so great disadvantages for your soul's good, by involving yourselves in worldly cares; if you had no dependence on having any thing to do with these things for more than the present day? If you did not depend on considerable more time in the world, would your inquiry be so much, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? And so little, How shall we make our calling and election sure? How shall we be assured that we are upon a good foundation for another world, and that we are in such a state that death cannot hurt us? How shall we be sure that we are ready to appear before the judgment seat of an heart searching God?

Would there be altogether so much of your time spent in laying up treasure on earth, and so little in laying up treasure in heaven, that you might have store against the day of death, were it not that you put death at a distance? Would you be so much raised at your temporal prosperity, and so much sunk when you meet with crosses and disappointments in your worldly affairs, if you did not think that continuance in the world is to be depended on for more days than the present.

Let those who very much affect to adorn their bodies in gaudy apparel, inquire whether they would think it worth their while to spend so much time to make themselves fine, and to set themselves forth as gayer than others, if they really had no dependence that their bodies would be preserved one day longer from being clasped in the cold arms of death?

2. Inquire whether you would not much less meddle with the concerns of others, and be much more employed with your own hearts, if each day you had no dependence on living another day. If you were sensible that you had no other day to depend upon than this day, you would be sensible that you had great affairs of your own to attend to. You would find a

great deal of business to do at home concerning affairs between God and your own soul; and considering that you cannot depend on another day, it would seem to you that you have but a short time in which to do it, and that therefore you have need to be much engaged in it. You would say as Christ did, I must work while the day lasts, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. You would find so much to be done, and so much difficulty in doing it, that you would have little leisure, and little heart to intermeddle with the business of others. Your business would be confined to a much narrower compass, to a less circle than now it is. You would have so much to do at home in your closets, and with your own hearts, that you would find no occasion to go abroad for business to fill up your time.

But the truth is, men conceive of a great deal of time which they have to be filled up, and hence they want business to fill it up: They depend on tomorrow, and the day following, and next month, and next year, yea many years to come. When they are young they depend on living to be middle aged, and when middle aged they depend on old age, and always put far away the day of death. Let them be young or old, there always seems to them to be a great vacancy between them and death; hence they wander to and fro for business to fill up that vacancy.

Whereas if they were sensible of the uncertainty of life, they would, in the first place, make sure of their own business; the business of their own precious, immortal souls would be done, before they would attend much to the business of other people. They would have no desire or disposition to concern themselves with every private quarrel which breaks out in the neighborhood. They would not think it much concerned them to inquire into the matter, and to pass their censure on the affair. They would find something else to do, than to set by the hour together, discussing and censuring the conduct of such and such persons, gathering up or rehearsing the stories which are carried about to the disadvantage of this and that person.

We seldom, if ever, see men who are upon sick beds, and look upon themselves very dangerously sick, disposed to spend their time in this manner; and the reason is, that they look upon it doubtful whether they shall live very long: They do not so much as others, depend on much time to spare; hence their minds are taken up more about their own souls' concerns, than about the concerns of others. So it would be with persons in health, if their health did not make them depend on a great deal of time in the world.

3. If you each day depended on no other day but the present, would you not engage and interest yourselves much less in party designs and schemes, than you are now wont to do? Among a people divided into two parties, as this town hath been for a long time, there is commonly much done by the partizans in forming schemes of opposition to one another. There is always a strife, who shall get their wills and carry their point. This often engages them in open quarrels, and also in secret intrigues. That there is so much done in these things, is a certain evidence that they boast themselves of to-morrow, and put death at a distance.

Men would certainly find themselves very much indisposed to such things, if they were so sensible of the uncertainty of life, as to depend on no other day than the present. It is therefore very proper, that you should every one examine yourselves in this particular, at this time. If it were really so with you, that you depended on no other day than the present, would your hearts be so much engaged in the strife between the two parties, as they often are? Would your spirits be so often raised and ruffled? Would you go about with so much of a grudge and prejudice against such and such men; harboring so much of old leaven, which so often breaks out in heats of spirit; and as an old sore which was skinned over, but not cured, sets to raging, breaks open and runs, with a touch which would not have hurt sound flesh?

Commonly in the management of a strife between two parties there is a great deal of envy. When any who belong to one of the parties seem to prosper, the other party will en-

vy them; it is a grievous thing to them. So there is also much contempt; when one of the parties gets the ascendant a little over the other, they are ready to make the utmost improvement of it, and to insult the other party.

There is commonly in such cases a great deal of mutual secret reproach. When those of one party get together then is the time to inveigh against those of the other party, and to set forth their injustice and their fraudulent practices. Then is the time for them to pass their censure on their words and actions. Then is the time to expose their own surmises and suspicions of what the other party intends, what it aims at in such and such things, what the purposes of individuals are, and what they suppose their scant actions are.

Then is the time for all that are friends in the cause, and engaged in the same designs, to entertain one another by ridiculing the words and actions of the other party, and to make themselves sport of their folly and their disappointments; and much is done at calling one another RACA and FOOLS, or other names equivalent, if not much more than equivalent. Then is the time to lay their heads together, to plot and contrive how they shall manage such an affair so as to disappoint the other party, and obtain their own wills.

Brethren, these things ought not so to be among a Christian people; especially among a people that has made the profession which we have made. Nor would they be so if it were not for your dependence on much future time in the world. If you were so sensible of your continual liableness to death, that every day was the last you depended upon, these things certainly would not be so. For let us but consider what are the effects of death with respect to such things. It puts an end to party quarrels. Many men hold these quarrels as long as they live. They begin young, and hold on through many great and sore afflictions and chastisements of Providence. The old sore remains, when the supporters of nature bow, and the eyes grow dim, and the hands tremble with age. But death, when that comes, puts an end to all their quarrelling in this world. Death silences the most clamorous, and censori-

ous, and backbiting tongue. When men are dead, they cease to lay schemes against those of another party: Death dashes all their schemes, so far as they have any concern in them. Psalm cxlvi. 4. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

When men are dead, they cease to bite and devour others; as it is said to have been of old a proverb among the Egyptians, *Dead men don't bite.* There are many who will bite and devour as long as they live, but death tames them. Men could not be quiet or safe by them while alive, but none will be afraid of them when they shall be dead. The bodies of those that made such a noise and tumult when alive, when dead, lie as quietly among the graves of their neighbors as any others. Their enemies, of whom they strove to get their wills while alive, get their wills of them when they are dead. Nothing can please their enemies better than to have them out of their way. It suits them, that those who were so troublesome to them, are locked up safe in the close grave, where they will no more stand in their way.

After men are dead, there are no more effects of their pride, their craftiness, their hatred and envy. Eccles. ix. 6. "Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished."

The time will soon come, when as many of you who are now present, as have for many years been at times warmly contending one with another, will be very peaceable as to any quarrelling in this world. Your dead bodies will probably lie quietly together in the same burying place. If you do not leave off contending before death, how natural will it be for others to have such thoughts as these in their minds, when they shall come to see your dead corpses; What! Is this the man who used to be so busy in carrying on the designs of his party? Oh, now he has done; now he hath no more any part in any of these things; now it doth not at all concern him, who get their wills, or what party is uppermost. We shall hear his voice no more in our *town meetings.* He will not sit

any more to reproach and laugh at others. He is gone to appear before his Judge, and to receive according to his conduct in life.

The consideration of such things as these would certainly have a mighty effect among us. If we did not put far away the day of death, if all acted every day as not depending on any other day, we should be a peaceable, quiet people.

4. Inquire whether or no you do not allow yourselves in some things, and endeavor to flatter yourselves that there is no evil in them, which you would by no means care to do if you had not a dependence on living till tomorrow. It is very common among men, when they are strongly enticed to some sinful practice, by their worldly interest, or by their carnal appetites, to pretend that they do not think there is any evil in it; when indeed they know better. The pretence they make use of for the present, to still the cry of their consciences, is no more than a pretence to serve a present turn. And if they expected to have their souls required of them that night, they would by no means dare to persist in the practice.

Therefore examine the liberties you take by this test, What would you think of them, if you now should have the following news sent you by some messenger from heaven; John or Thomas, (or whatever your name be,) this night thy soul shall be required of thee. How would such tidings strike you! How would they alter the face of things! Doubtless your thoughts would be very quick; you would soon begin to reflect on yourselves, and to examine your past and present conduct. And in what colors would these and those liberties which you now take, appear to you in the case now supposed? Would you then be as full in it as you are now, that there is no evil in them? Would you not be at all the less bold to go forward and meet death, for having continued in such practices? Would you dare to commit such acts again before you should die, which now you say are lawful? Would not the few hours which you would have to live, be at all the more uncomfortable to you, for having done such things? Would you not presently wish that you had let them alone? Yea, would

they not appear frightful and terrifying like ghosts to you? If it be thus, it is a sign that the reason why you now allow yourselves in them, and plead for the lawfulness of them, is, that you put death at a distance, and depend on many other days in the world.

5. Inquire whether you do not some things on the presumption, that you shall hereafter repent of them. Is not this the very thing which causes you to dare to do such things as you do? Is it not the very ground on which you venture so and so to gratify your lusts? Let young people examine all their secret carriage; what they do alone in the dark and in secret corners. God knoweth and your own hearts know, though men do not know. Put the question impartially to your own consciences; is not this the very thing that gives you the courage to do as you do, that you hear that God is a very merciful God, and that he often of his sovereign mercy gives repentance of great sins, and even wilful sins, and in consequence of repentance forgives? And so you hope that one day or other he will do so to you. You intend sometime hereafter earnestly to seek it; and you hope you shall be awakened. And if you be very earnest, as you intend to be, you hope you shall be converted, and then you shall be forgiven, and it will be as well as if you had never committed such sins.

If this be the case, consider how you boast of tomorrow, and foolishly depend on future opportunity to repent, as well as foolishly presume on the mercy of God to give you repentance, at the same time that you take a course to provoke God, forever to give you up to a sealed hardness and blindness, and to a most fearful damnation; not considering that God will glorify his revenging justice as well as his mercy; nor remembering the sad example of Esau, "who for a morsel of meat, sold his birth right; and afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: For he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. xii. 16, 17.

6. Inquire whether you improve this day, as one who doth not depend upon ever having opportunity to keep another Sabbath, or hear another sermon. It appears from what hath been already said, that you have no grounds to depend on any more such opportunities. Now the day is present, and so you are in the better capacity to determine how it is with you. It is but for you to reflect upon yourselves, to look inward, and see how it is with you now at this present time. And how is it? Are you as strict and as diligent in keeping this Sabbath, watching your thoughts, keeping your hearts, striving in duties both public and private, and improving ordinances, as might be expected of one who hath no dependence on ever enjoying such an opportunity any more; one who doth not depend on ever setting foot again within the walls of God's house?

Do you hear this sermon with that attention, and care, and desire, and endeavor to improve it for your good, as you would, if you did not depend on ever hearing another sermon; or did not depend upon it that your bodies would not be in the grave, and your souls fixed in eternity, in their unalterable state, before the next Sabbath?

7. Are you careful to see to it that the grounds of your hope are good? A man who hath an hope of being in a state of acceptance with God, but is not sure, if he had no dependence on any other day's opportunity of making it sure than to-day; if he did not at all depend upon it, but that his hope must be tried before tomorrow, by the all seeing, heart searching God; would be very strict in examining himself and searching the grounds of his hope, and would not rest in an uncertainty. He would be very thorough in informing himself what might be depended on as good evidence of an interest in Christ, and what not; and would be exceedingly strict in searching his own heart, to see whether there were any thing in him that comes up to the requisites laid down in the scriptures.

If what appears hopeful in him were dim and obscure, he would set himself very earnestly to obtain that which would

be more clear and manifest, and would cry earnestly to God for it, and would apply himself to a diligent use of means in order to it. And good reason why; for he depends on no other opportunity to make his calling and election sure, than what he hath today. Inquire therefore whether you be thus thorough in examining your hope. And are you thus careful effectually to see to it, that you are on a sure foundation? If not, then you behave yourselves as those that depend on tomorrow.

II. This doctrine may be improved in an use of EXHORTATION to all, to spend every day as not depending on any other day. It is certainly most reasonable that we should so do. God hath concealed from us the day of our death, without doubt, partly for this end, that we might be excited to be always ready, and might live as those that are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, agreeably to the counsel which Christ gives us, Matth. xxiv. 42, 43, 44: And chap. xxv. 13: And Mark xiii. 32. &c.

That watchman is not faithful, who, being set to defend an house from thieves, or a city from an enemy who is at hand, will, at any hour, venture to sleep, trusting that the thief or the enemy will not come. Therefore it is expected of the watchman, that he behave himself every hour of the night, as one who doth not depend upon it that the enemy will tarry until the next hour. Now, therefore, let me in Christ's name, renew the call and counsel of Jesus Christ to you, to watch as those that know not what hour your Lord will come. Let me call upon those poor wretches who are hitherto in a natural condition, having never been born again. Depend not upon it, that you will not be in hell before tomorrow morning. You have no reason for any such dependence; God hath not promised to keep you from it, or to withhold his wrath so long.

How can you reasonably be easy or quiet for one day, or one night, in such a condition, when you know not but that your Lord will come this night, and what hour of the night

you know not? And if you should then be found as you now are, unregenerate, how unprepared would you be for his coming, and how fearful would be the consequence! Be exhorted therefore, for your own sakes, immediately to awake out of sleep, and sleep no more, but watch henceforward, and improve the remainder of this day, and each of your days henceforward, if you shall live to see any more days, as not depending on any other day.

Let me exhort every one, of whatever character, to have no dependence on any future time; to keep every Sabbath as having no dependence on the opportunity to enjoy another Sabbath; to hear every sermon, as if it were the last that you shall ever hear. And when you go into your closets, and address yourselves to your Father who seeth in secret, do it in no dependence on any future opportunity to perform the same duty. When any of you that are young go into company for your amusement and diversion, consider that that may be the last opportunity of the like nature that ever you may have. In all your dealings with your neighbors, act as if you were never to make another bargain. Behave in your families every day, as though you depended on no other, than to take your final leave of them before another day.....Here I shall offer you two motives.

1. Consider, if you will hearken to this counsel, how much it will tend to your safety and peace in life and death. It is the way really and truly to be ready for death; yea to be fit to live or fit to die; to be ready for affliction and adversity, and for whatever God in his providence shall bring upon you. It is the way to be in, not only an habitual, but actual preparedness for all changes, and particularly for your last change.

It is the way to possess your souls in a serene and undisturbed peace, and to enable you to go on with an immoveable fortitude of soul, to meet the most frightful changes, to encounter the most formidable enemies, and to be ready with unshaken confidence to triumph over death whenever you meet him; to have your hearts fixed trusting in God, as one that stands on a firm foundation, and hath for his habitation

the munition of rocks, that is not afraid of evil tidings, but laughs at the fear of the enemy. It will be the way for you to possess that quietness and assurance spoken of, Isai. xxxii. 17. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

The servant who always stands watching, will not be at all surprised at the news that his Lord is coming. This will be the way for you to live above the fear of death. Yea, if heaven and earth should shake, you may stand firm and unshaken, being settled on a rock, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. O how happy are such persons, who have such safety and peace! What a blessed peace is that which arises from such a constant preparation for death! How happy therefore is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing!

2. What dismal calamities and miseries mankind are subject to for want of this, for want of behaving themselves every day as not depending on any future day! The way of the world is, one day foolishly to depend on another, yea on many others. And what is the consequence? Why, the consequence with respect to the bigger part of the world is, that they live all their days without any true peace or rest of soul. They are all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death. And when death sensibly approaches they are put into a terrible fright. They have a dismal view of their past lives; the ill improvement of their time, and the sins they have been guilty of, stand staring them in the face, and are more frightful to them than so many devils. And when they look forward into that eternity whither they are going, how dismal is the prospect! O how do their hearts shrink at the thought of it! They go before the judgment seat of God, as those that are dragged thither, while they would gladly, if they could, hide themselves in the caves and dens of the earth.

And what is worse yet than all the disquietude and terror of conscience in this world; the consequence of a contrary behavior, with respect to the bulk of mankind, is their eternal

perdition. They flatter themselves, that they shall see another day, and then another, and trust to that, until finally most of them are swallowed up in hell, to lament their folly to all eternity, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Consider how it was with all the foolish virgins who trusted to the delay of the bridegroom's coming; when he came they were surprised, and found unprepared, having no oil in their lamps at that time; and while they went to buy, those who were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut against them, and they came afterwards crying in vain, *Lord, Lord, open to us.*

SERMON XXIV.*

Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer.

JOB xxvii. 10.

WILL HE ALWAYS CALL UPON GOD?

CONCERNING these words, I would observe,

1. Who it is that is here spoken of, viz. the hypocrite; as you may see, if you take the two preceding verses with the verse of the text. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job's three friends, in their speeches to him, insisted much upon it, that he was an hypocrite. But Job, in this chapter, asserts his sincerity and integrity, and shows how different his own behavior had been from that of hypocrites. Particularly he declares his stedfast and immoveable resolution of persevering and holding out in the ways of relig-

* Dated June, 1740.

ion and righteousness to the end; as you may see in the six first verses. In the text, he shows how contrary to this stedfastness and perseverance the character of the hypocrite is, who is not wont thus to hold out in religion.

2. We may observe what duty of religion it is, with respect to which the hypocrite is decyphered in the text, and that is the duty of *prayer*, or calling upon God.

3. Here is something supposed of the hypocrite relating to this duty, viz. That he may continue in it *for a while;* he may call upon God for a season.

4. Something asserted, viz. That it is not the manner of hypocrites to continue *always* in this duty. *Will he always call upon God?* It is in the form of an interrogation; but the words have the force of a strong negation, or of an assertion, that however the hypocrite may call upon God for a season, yet he will not always continue in it.

DOCTRINE.

However hypocrites may continue for a season in the duty of prayer, yet it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure, to leave it off.

In speaking upon this doctrine, I shall show,

I. How hypocrites often continue for a season to call upon God.

II. How it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of this duty.

III. Give some reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

I. I would show how hypocrites often continue for a season in the duty of prayer.

1. They do so for a while after they have received common illuminations and affections. While they are under awakenings, they may, through fear of hell, call upon God, and attend very constantly upon the duty of secret prayer. And after they have had some melting affections, having their hearts much moved with the goodness of God, or with some affecting encouragements, and false joy and comfort; while these impressions last they continue to call upon God in the duty of secret prayer.

2. After they have obtained an hope, and have made profession of their good estate, they often continue for a while in the duty of secret prayer. For a while they are affected with their hope: They think that God hath delivered them out of a natural condition, and given them an interest in Christ, thus introducing them into a state of safety from that eternal misery which they lately feared. With this supposed kindness of God to them, they are much affected, and often find in themselves for a while a kind of love to God, excited by his supposed love to them. Now, while this affection towards God continues, the duties of religion seem pleasant to them; it is even with some delight that they approach to God in their closets; and for the present it may be, they think of no other than continuing to call upon God as long as they live.

Yea, they may continue in the duty of secret prayer for a while after the liveliness of their affections is past, partly through the influence of their former intentions: They intended to continue seeking God always; and now suddenly to leave off, would therefore be too shocking to their own minds; and partly through the force of their own preconceived notions, and what they have always believed, viz. That godly persons do continue in religion, and that their goodness is not like the morning cloud. Therefore, though they have no love to the duty of prayer, and begin to grow weary of it, yet as they love their own hope, they are somewhat backward to take a course, which will prove it to be a false hope, and so deprive them of it.

If they should at once carry themselves so as they have always been taught is a sign of a false hope, they would scare themselves Their hope is dear to them, and it would scare them to see any plain evidence that it is not true. Hence, for a considerable time after the force of their illuminations and affections is over, and after they hate the duty of prayer, and would be glad to have done with it, if they could, without showing themselves to be hypocrites; they hold up a kind of attendance upon the duty of secret prayer. This may keep up the outside of religion in them for a good while, and occasion it to be somewhat slowly that they are brought to neglect it. They must not leave off suddenly, because that would be too great a shock to their false peace. But they must come gradually to it, as they find their consciences can bear it, and as they can find out devices and salvos to cover over the matter, and make their so doing consistent, in their own opinion, with the truth of their hope. But,

II. It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of this duty. We are often taught, that the seeming goodness and piety of hypocrites is not of a lasting and persevering nature. It is so with respect to their practice of the duty of prayer in particular, and especially of secret prayer. They can omit this duty, and their omission of it not be taken notice of by others, who know what profession they have made. So that a regard to their own reputation doth not oblige them still to practise it. If others saw how they neglect it, it would exceedingly shock their charity towards them. But their neglect doth not fall under their observation; at least not under the observation of many. Therefore they may omit this duty, and still have the credit of being converted persons.

Men of this character can come to a neglect of secret prayer by degrees without very much shocking their peace. For though indeed for a converted person to live in a great measure without secret prayer, is very wide of the notion they once had of a true convert; yet they find means by degrees to

alter their notions, and to bring their principles to suit with their inclinations; and at length they come to that, in their notions of things, that a man may be a convert, and yet live very much in neglect of this duty. In time, they can bring all things to suit well together, an hope of heaven, and an indulgence of sloth in gratifying carnal appetites, and living in a great measure a prayerless life. They cannot indeed suddenly make these things agree; it must be a work of time; and length of time will effect it. By degrees they find out ways to guard and defend their consciences against those powerful enemies; so that those enemies, and a quiet, secure conscience, can at length dwell pretty well together.

Whereas it is asserted in the doctrine, that it is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure to leave off this duty; I would observe to you,

1. That it is not intended but that they may commonly continue to the end of life in yielding an external attendance on open prayer, or prayer with others. They may commonly be present at public prayers in the congregation, and also at family prayer. This, in such places of light as this is, men commonly do before ever they are so much as awakened. Many vicious persons, who make no pretence to serious religion, commonly attend public prayers in the congregation, and also more private prayers in the families in which they live, unless it be when carnal designs interfere, or when their youthful pleasures and diversions, and their vain company call them; and then they make no conscience of attending family prayer. Otherwise they may continue to attend upon prayer as long as they live, and yet may truly be said not to call upon God. For such prayer, in the manner of it, is not their own. They are present only for the sake of their credit, or in compliance with others. They may be present at these prayers, and yet have no proper prayer of their own. Many of those concerning whom it may be said, as in Job xv. 4, That *they cast off fear and restrain prayer before God*, are yet frequently present at family and public prayers.

2. But they in a great measure leave off the practice of secret prayer. They come to this pass by degrees. At first they begin to be careless about it, under some particular temptations. Because they have been out in young company, or have been taken up very much with worldly business, they omit it once: After that they more easily omit it again. Thus it presently becomes a frequent thing with them to omit it; and after a while, it comes to that pass, that they seldom attend it. Perhaps they attend it on Sabbath days, and sometimes on other days. But they have ceased to make it a constant practice daily to retire to worship God alone, and to seek his face in secret places. They sometimes do a little to quiet conscience, and just to keep alive their old hope; because it would be shocking to them, even after all their subtle dealing with their consciences to call themselves converts, and yet totally to live without prayer. Yet the practice of secret prayer they have in a great measure left off.

I come now,

III. To the reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

1. Hypocrites never had the spirit of prayer given them. They may have been stirred up to the external performance of this duty, and that with a great deal of earnestness and affection, and yet always have been destitute of the true spirit of prayer. The spirit of prayer is an holy spirit, a gracious spirit. We read of the spirit of grace and supplication, Zech. xii. 10. I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the *spirit of grace and supplications*. Wherever there is a true spirit of supplication, there is the spirit of grace. The true spirit of prayer is no other than God's own Spirit dwelling in the hearts of the saints. And as this spirit comes from God, so doth it naturally tend to God in holy breathings and pantings. It naturally leads to God, to converse with him by prayer. Therefore the Spirit is said to make intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered, Rom. viii. 26.

The Spirit of God makes intercession for them, as it is that Spirit which in some respect indites their prayers, and leads them so and so to pour out their souls before God. Therefore the saints are said to worship God in the SPIRIT; Phil. iii. 3. We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit; and John iv. 23. The true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The truly godly have the spirit of adoption, the spirit of a child, to which it is natural to go to God and call upon him, crying to him as to a father.

But hypocrites have nothing of this spirit of adoption: They have not the spirit of children; for this is a gracious and holy spirit, only given in a real work of regeneration. Therefore it is often mentioned as a part of the distinguishing character of the godly, that they call upon God. Psal. cxlv. 18, 19. The Lord is nigh to them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he will also hear their cry, and will save them. Joel ii. 32. It shall come to pass, that whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.

It is natural to one who is truly born from above to pray to God, and to pour out his soul in holy supplications before his heavenly Father. This is as natural to the new nature and life as breathing is to the nature and life of the body. But hypocrites have not this new nature. Those illuminations and affections which they had, went away, and left no change of nature. Therefore prayer naturally dies away in them, having no foundation for the keeping of it up laid in the nature of the soul. It is maintained, while it is maintained, only by a certain force put upon nature. But force is not constant; and as that declines, nature will take place again.

The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of true love to God, and that naturally inclines the soul to those duties wherein it is conversant with God, and makes it to delight in approaching to God. But an hypocrite hath no such spirit. He is left under the reigning power of enmity against God, which naturally inclines him to shun the presence of God.

The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of faith and reliance on the power, wisdom, and mercy of God, and such a spirit is naturally expressed in prayer. True prayer is nothing else but faith expressed. Hence we read of *the prayer of faith*; James v. 15. True Christian prayer is the faith and reliance of the soul breathed forth in words. But an hypocrite is without the spirit of faith. He hath no true reliance or dependence on God, but is really selfdependent.

As to those common convictions and affections which the hypocrite had, and which made him keep up the duty of prayer for a while; they not reaching the bottom of the heart, nor being accompanied with any change of nature, a little thing extinguishes them. The cares of the world commonly choke and suffocate them, and often the pleasures and vanities of youth totally put an end to them, and with them ends their constant practice of the duty of prayer.

2. When an hypocrite hath had his false conversion, his wants are in his sense of things already supplied, his desires are already answered; and so he finds no further business at the throne of grace. He never was sensible that he had any other needs, but a need of being safe from hell. And now that he is converted, as he thinks, that need is supplied. Why then should he still go on to resort to the throne of grace with earnest requests? He is out of danger; all that he was afraid of is removed: He hath got enough to carry him to heaven, and what more should he desire?....While he was under awakenings, he had this to stir him up to go to God in prayer, that he was in continual fear of hell. This put him upon crying to God for mercy. But since, in his own opinion, he is converted, he hath no further business about which to go to God. And although he may keep up the duty of prayer in the outward form a little while, for fear of spoiling his hope, yet he will find a dull business of continuing it without any need or necessity, and so by degrees he will let drop the practice. The work of the hypocrite is done when he is converted, and therefore he standeth in no further need of help.

But it is far otherwise with the true convert. His work is not done; but he finds still a great work to do, and great wants to be supplied. He sees himself still to be a poor, empty, helpless creature, and that he still stands in great and continual need of God's help. He is sensible that without God he can do nothing. A false conversion makes a man in his own eyes selfsufficient. He saith he is rich, and increased with goods, and hath need of nothing; and knoweth not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. But after a true conversion, the soul remains sensible of its own impotence and emptiness, as it is in itself, and its sense of it is rather increased than diminished. It is still sensible of its universal dependence on God for every thing. A true convert is sensible that his grace is very imperfect; and he is very far from having all that he desires. Instead of that, by conversion are begotten in him new desires which he never had before. He now finds in him holy appetites, an hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a longing after more acquaintance and communion with God. So that he hath business enough still at the throne of grace; yea, his business there, instead of being diminished, is, since his conversion, rather increased.

3. The hope which the hypocrite hath of his good estate takes off the force that the command of God before had upon his conscience; so that now he dares neglect so plain a duty. The command which requires the practice of the duty of prayer is exceeding plain; Matth. xxvi. 41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Eph. vi. 18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints. Matth. vi. 6. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." As long as the hypocrite was in his own apprehension in continual danger of hell, he durst not disobey these commands. But since he is, as he thinks, safe from hell, he is grown bold, he dares to live in the neglect of the plainest command in the Bible.

4. It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, to return to sinful practices, which will tend to keep them from praying. While they were under convictions, they reformed their lives, and walked very exactly. This reformation continues for a little time perhaps after their supposed conversion, while they are much affected with hope and false comfort. But as these things die away, their old lusts revive, and they by degrees return like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. They return to their sensual practices, to their worldly practices, to their proud and contentious practices, as before. And no wonder this makes them forsake their closets. Sinning and praying agree not well together. If a man be constant in the duty of secret prayer, it will tend to restrain him from wilful sinning. So, on the other hand, if he allow himself in sinful practices, it will restrain him from praying. It will give quite another turn to his mind, so that he will have no disposition to the practice of such a duty: It will be contrary to him. A man who knows that he lives in sin against God, will not be inclined to come daily into the presence of God; but will rather be inclined to fly from his presence, as Adam, when he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, ran away from God, and hid himself among the trees of the garden.

To keep up the duty of prayer after he hath given loose to his lusts, would tend very much to disquiet a man's conscience. It would give advantage to his conscience to testify aloud against him. If he should come from his wickedness into the presence of God, immediately to speak to him, his conscience would, as it were, fly in his face. Therefore hypocrites, as they by degrees admit their wicked practices, exclude prayer.

5. Hypocrites never counted the cost of perseverance in seeking God, and of following him to the end of life. To continue instant in prayer with all perseverance to the end of life, requires much care, watchfulness, and labor. For much opposition is made to it by the flesh, the world, and the devil; and Christians meet with many temptations to forsake this

practice. He that would persevere in this duty must be laborious in religion in general. But hypocrites never count the cost of such labor; i. e. they never were prepared in the disposition of their minds to give their lives to the service of God, and to the duties of religion. It is therefore no great wonder they are weary and give out, after they have continued for a while, as their affections are gone, and they find that prayer to them grows irksome and tedious.

6. Hypocrites have no interest in those gracious promises which God hath made to his people, of those spiritual supplies which are needful in order to uphold them in the way of their duty to the end. God hath promised to true saints that they shall not forsake him; Jer. xxxii. 40. I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. He hath promised that he will keep them in the way of their duty; 1 Thess. v. 23, 24. And the God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God your spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. But hypocrites have no interest in these and such like promises; and therefore are liable to fall away. If God do not uphold men, there is no dependence on their stedfastness. If the Spirit of God depart from them, they will soon become careless and profane, and there will be an end to their seeming devotion and piety.

APPLICATION

May be in an use of EXHORTATION, in two branches.

I. I would exhort those who have entertained an hope of their being true converts, and yet since their supposed conversion have left off the duty of secret prayer, and do ordinarily allow themselves in the omission of it, to throw away their hope. If you have left off calling upon God, it is time for you to leave off hoping and flattering yourselves with an imagina-

tion that you are the children of God. Probably it will be a very difficult thing for you to do this. It is hard for a man to let go an hope of heaven, on which he hath once allowed himself to lay hold, and which he hath retained for a considerable time. True conversion is a rare thing; but that men are brought off from a false hope of conversion, after they are once settled and established in it, and have continued in it for some time, is much more rare.

Those things in men, which, if they were known to others, would be sufficient to convince others that they are hypocrites, will not convince themselves; and those things which would be sufficient to convince them concerning others, and to cause them to cast others entirely out of their charity, will not be sufficient to convince them concerning themselves. They can make larger allowances for themselves than they can for others. They can find out ways to solve objections against their own hope, when they can find none in the like case for their neighbor.

But if your case be such as is spoken of in the doctrine, it is surely time for you to seek a better hope, and another work of God's Spirit, than ever you have yet experienced; something more thorough and effectual. When you see and find by experience, that the seed which was sown in your hearts, though at first it sprang up and seemed flourishing, yet is withering away, as by the heat of the sun, or is choked, as with thorns; this shows in what sort of ground the seed was sown, that it is either stony or thorny ground; and that therefore it is necessary you should pass through another change, whereby your heart may become good ground, which shall bring forth fruit with patience.

I insist not on that as a reason why you should not throw away your hope, that you had the judgment of others, that the change of which you were the subject was right. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, whether you be approved or condemned, and whether it be by minister or people, wise or unwise. 1 Cor. iv. 3. "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." If

your goodness have proved to be as the morning cloud and early dew; if you be one of those who have forsaken God, and left off calling upon his name, you have the judgment of God, and the sentence of God in the Scriptures against you, which is a thousand times more than to have the judgment of all the wise and godly men and ministers in the world in your favor.

Others, from your account of things, may have been obliged to have charity for you, and to think that, provided you were not mistaken, and in your account did not misrepresent things, or express them by wrong terms, you were really converted. But what a miserable foundation is this, upon which to build an hope as to your eternal state!

Here I request your attention to a few things in particular, which I have to say to you concerning your hope.

1. Why will you retain that hope which by evident experience you find poisons you? Is it reasonable to think, that an holy hope, an hope that is from heaven, would have such an influence? No surely; nothing of such a malignant influence comes from that world of purity and glory. No poison groweth in the paradise of God. The same hope which leads men to sin in this world will lead to hell hereafter. Why therefore will you retain such an hope, of which your own experience shows you the ill tendency, in that it encourages you to lead a wicked life? For certainly that life is a wicked life wherein you live in the neglect of so well known a duty as that of secret prayer, and in the disobedience of so plain a command of God, as that by which this duty is enjoined. And is not a way of disobedience to God a way to hell?

If your own experience of the nature and tendency of your hope will not convince you of the falseness of it, what will? Are you resolved to retain your hope, let it prove ever so unsound and hurtful? Will you hold it fast till you go to hell with it? Many men cling to a false hope, and embrace it so closely, that they never let it go till the flames of hell cause their arms to unclench and let go their hold. Consider how

you will answer it at the day of judgment, when God shall call you to an account for your folly in resting in such an hope. Will it be a sufficient answer for you to say, that you had the charity of others, and that they thought your conversion was right?

Certainly it is foolish for men to imagine, that God had no more wisdom, or could contrive no other way of bestowing comfort and hope of eternal life, than one which should encourage men to forsake him.

2. How is your doing, as you do, consistent with loving God above all? If you have not a spirit to love God above your dearest earthly friends, and your most pleasant earthly enjoyments; the scriptures are very plain, and full in it, that you are not true Christians. But if you had indeed such a spirit, would you thus grow weary of the practice of drawing near to him, and become habitually so averse to it, as in a great measure to cast off so plain a duty, which is so much the life of a child of God? It is the nature of love to be averse to absence, and to love a near access to those whom we love. We love to be with them; we delight to come often to them, and to have much conversation with them. But when a person who hath heretofore been wont to converse freely with another, by degrees forsakes him, grows strange, and converses with him but little, and that although the other be importunate with him for the continuance of their former intimacy; this plainly shows the coldness of his heart towards him.

The neglect of the duty of prayer seems to be inconsistent with supreme love to God also upon another account, and that is, that it is against the will of God so plainly revealed. True love to God seeks to please God in every thing, and universally to conform to his will.

3. Your thus restraining prayer before God is not only inconsistent with the love, but also with the fear of God. It is an argument that you cast off fear, as is manifest by that text, Job xv. 4. "Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God." While you thus live in the transgression of so plain a command of God, you evidently show, that there is no

fear of God before your eyes. Psal. xxxvi. 1. "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

4. Consider how living in such a neglect is inconsistent with leading an holy life. We are abundantly instructed in scripture, that true Christians do lead an holy life; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii. 14; and that every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure, 1 John iii. 3. In Prov. xvi. 17, it is said, The *highway* of the upright is to depart from evil, i. e. it is, as it were, the common beaten road in which all the godly travel. To the like purpose is Isai. xxxv. 8. A *highway* shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called *the way of holiness;* the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for *those*, i. e. those redeemed persons spoken of in the foregoing verses. It is spoken of in Rom. viii. 1, as the character of all believers, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

But how is a life, in a great measure prayerless, consistent with an holy life? To lead an holy life is to lead a life devoted to God; a life of worshipping and serving God; a life consecrated to the service of God. But how doth he lead such a life who doth not so much as maintain the duty of prayer? How can such a man be said to walk by the Spirit, and to be a servant of the Most High God? An holy life is a life of faith. The life that true Christians live in the world, they live by the faith of the Son of God. But who can believe that that man lives by faith who lives without prayer, which is the natural expression of faith? Prayer is as natural an expression of faith as breathing is of life; and to say a man lives a life of faith, and yet lives a prayerless life, is every whit as inconsistent and incredible, as to say, that a man lives without breathing. A prayerless life is so far from being an holy life, that it is a profane life: He that lives so, lives like an Heathen, who calleth not on God's name; he that lives a prayerless life, lives without God in the world.

5. If you live in the neglect of secret prayer, you show your good will to neglect all the worship of God. He that prays only when he prays with others, would not pray at all, were it not that the eyes of others are upon him. He that will not pray where none but God seeth him, manifestly doth not pray at all out of respect to God, or regard to his allseeing eye, and therefore doth in effect cast off all prayer. And he that casts off prayer, in effect casts off all the worship of God, of which prayer is the principal duty. Now, what a miserable saint is he who is no worshipper of God! He that casts off the worship of God, in effect casts off God himself: He refuses to own him, or to be conversant with him as his God. For the way in which men own God, and are conversant with him as their God, is by worshipping him.

6. How can you expect to dwell with God for ever, if you so neglect and forsake him here? This your practice shows, that you place not your happiness in God, in nearness to him, and communion with him. He who refuses to come and visit, and converse with a friend, and who in a great measure forsakes him, when he is abundantly invited and importuned to come; plainly shows that he places not his happiness in the company and conversation of that friend. Now, if this be the case with you respecting God, then how can you expect to have it for your happiness to all eternity, to be with God, and to enjoy holy communion with him?

Let those persons who hope they are converted, and yet have in a great measure left off the duty of secret prayer, and whose manner it is ordinarily to neglect it, for their own sake seriously consider these things. For what will profit them to please themselves with *that*, while they live, which will fail them at last, and leave them in fearful and amazing disappointment?

It is probable, that some of you who have entertained a good opinion of your state, and have looked upon yourselves as converts; but have of late in a great measure left off the duty of secret prayer; will this evening attend secret prayer, and so may continue to do for a little while after your hearing

this sermon, to the end, that you may solve the difficulty and the objection which is made against the truth of your hope. But this will not hold. As it hath been in former instances of the like nature, so what you now hear will have such effect upon you but a little while. When the business and cares of the world shall again begin to crowd a little upon you, or the next time you shall go out into young company, it is probable you will again neglect this duty. The next time a *frolic* shall be appointed, to which it is proposed to you to go, it is highly probable you will neglect not only secret prayer, but also family prayer. Or at least, after a while, you will come to the same pass again, as before, in casting off fear and restraining prayer before God.

It is not very likely that you will ever *be constant and persevering in this duty*, until you shall have obtained a better principle in your hearts. The streams which have no springs to feed them will dry up. The drought and heat consume the snow waters. Although they run plentifully in the spring, yet when the sun ascends higher with a burning heat, they are gone. The seed that is sown in stony places, though it seem to flourish at present, yet as the sun shall rise with a burning heat, will wither away. None will bring forth fruit with patience, but those whose hearts are become good ground.

Without any heavenly seed remaining in them, men may, whenever they fall in among the godly, continue all their lives to talk like saints. They may, for their credit's sake, tell of what they have experienced: But their *deeds* will not hold. They may continue to tell of their inward experiences, and yet live in the neglect of secret prayer, and of other duties.

II. I would take occasion from this doctrine to exhort all to persevere in the duty of prayer. This exhortation is much insisted on in the word of God. It is insisted on in the Old Testament; 1 Chron. xvi. 11. "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face *continually*."....Isai. lxii. 7. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence;" i. e. be not si-

lent as to the voice of prayer, as is manifest by the following words, "and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth," Israel of old is reproved for growing weary of the duty of prayer. Isai. xliii. 22. "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, thou hast been weary of me, O Israel."

Perseverance in the duty of prayer is very much insisted on in the New Testament; as Luke xviii. at the beginning, "A man ought always to pray, and not to faint;" i. e. not to be discouraged or weary of the duty; but should always continue in it. Again, Luke xxi. 36. "Watch ye therefore, and pray *always*." We have the example of Anna the prophetess set before us, Luke i. 36, &c. who, though she had lived to be more than an hundred years old, yet never was weary of this duty. It is said, "She departed not from the temple, but served God, with fastings and prayers, night and day." Cornelius also is commended for his constancy in this duty. It is said, that he prayed to God always; Acts x. 2. The Apostle Paul, in his epistles, insists very much on constancy in this duty; Rom. xii. 12. "Continuing instant in prayer." Eph. vi. 18, 19. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Col. iv. 2. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same." 1 Thess. v. 17. "Pray without ceasing." To the same effect the Apostle Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 7. "Watch unto prayer."....Thus abundantly the scripture insists upon it, that we should persevere in the duty of prayer; which shows that it is of very great importance that we should persevere. If the contrary be the manner of hypocrites, as hath been shown in the doctrine, then surely we ought to beware of this leaven.

But here let the following things be particularly considered as motives to perseverance in this duty.

1. That perseverance in the way of duty is necessary to salvation, and is abundantly declared so to be in the holy scriptures; as Isai. lxiv. 5. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth

and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: Behold, thou art wroth, for we have sinned: In those is *continuance*, and we shall be saved." Heb. x. 38, 39. "Now the just shall live by faith: But if any man *draw back*, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who *draw back unto perdition*; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Rom. xi. 22. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: On them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou *continue* in his goodness; *otherwise* thou also shalt be cut off....So in many other places.

Many, when they think they are converted, seem to imagine that their work is done, and that there is nothing else needful in order to their going to heaven. Indeed perseverance in holiness of life is not necessary to salvation, as the righteousness by which a right to salvation is obtained. Nor is actual perseverance necessary in order to our becoming interested in that righteousness by which we are justified. For as soon as ever a soul hath believed in Christ, or hath put forth one act of faith in him, it becomes interested in his righteousness, and in all the promises purchased by it.

But persevering in the way of duty is necessary to salvation, as a concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation. There is never a title to salvation without it, though it be not the righteousness by which a title to salvation is obtained. It is necessary to salvation, as it is the necessary consequence of true faith. It is an evidence which universally attends uprightness, and the defect of it is an infallible evidence of the want of uprightness. Psal. cxxv. 4, 5. There such as are good and upright in heart, are distinguished from such as fall away or turn aside: "Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as *turn aside to their crooked ways*, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. But peace shall be upon Israel." It is mentioned as an evidence that the hearts of the children of Israel were not right with God, that they did not persevere in the ways of holiness. Psal. lxxviii. 8.

"A generation that set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit was not *stedfast* with God."

Christ gives this as a distinguishing character of those that are his *disciples indeed*, and of a true and saving faith, that it is accompanied with perseverance in the obedience of Christ's word. John viii. 31. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye *continue* in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." This is mentioned as a necessary evidence of an interest in Christ, Heb. iii. 14. "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast to the end."

Perseverance is not only a necessary concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation; but also a necessary prerequisite to the actual possession of eternal life. It is the only way to heaven, the narrow way that leadeth to life. Hence Christ exhorts the church of Philadelphia to persevere in holiness from this consideration, that it was necessary in order to her obtaining the crown. Rev. iii. 11. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is necessary, not only that persons should once have been walking in the way of duty, but that they should be found so doing when Christ cometh. Luke xii. 43. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." Holding out to the end is often made the condition of actual salvation. Mat. x. 22. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved:" And Rev. ii. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

2. In order to your own perseverance in the way of duty, your own care and watchfulness is necessary. For though it be promised that true saints shall persevere, yet that is no argument that their care and watchfulness is not necessary in order to it; because their care to keep the commands of God is the thing promised. If the saints should fail of care, watchfulness, and diligence to persevere in holiness, that failure of their care and diligence would itself be a failure of holiness. They who persevere not in watchfulness and diligence, persevere not in holiness of life, for holiness of life very much con-

sists in watchfulness and diligence to keep the commands of God. It is one promise of the covenant of grace, that the saints shall keep God's commandments. Ezek. xi. 19, 20. Yet that is no argument that they have no need to take care to keep these commandments, or to do their duty. So the promise of God, that the saints shall persevere in holiness, is no argument that it is not necessary that they should take heed lest they fall away.

Therefore the scriptures abundantly warn men to watch over themselves diligently, and to give earnest heed lest they fall away. 1 Cor. xv. 13. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." 1 Cor. x. 12. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Heb. iii. 12, 13, 14. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." Heb. iv. 1. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." 2 Pet. iii. 17. "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness." 2 John v. 8. "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Thus you see how earnestly the scriptures press on Christians exhortations to take diligent heed to themselves that they fall not away. And certainly these cautions are not without reason.

The scriptures particularly insist upon watchfulness in order to perseverance in the duty of prayer. *Watch and pray*, saith Christ; which implies that we should watch *unto* prayer, as the Apostle Peter says, 1 Pet. iv. 7. It implies, that we should watch against a neglect of prayer, as well as against other sins. The apostle, in places which have been already mentioned, directs us to pray with all prayer, *watching* there-

unto with all perseverance, and to *continue* in prayer, and *watch* in the same. Nor is it any wonder that the apostles so much insisted on watching, in order to a continuance in prayer with all perseverance; for there are many temptations to neglect this duty; first to be inconstant in it, and from time to time to omit it; then in a great measure to neglect it. The devil watches to draw us away from God, and to hinder us from going to him in prayer. We are surrounded with one and another tempting object, business and diversion: Particularly we meet with many things which are great temptations to a neglect of this duty.

3. To move you to persevere in the duty of prayer, consider how much you always stand in need of the help of God. If persons who have formerly attended this duty, leave it off, the language of it is, that now they stand in no further need of God's help, that they have no further occasion to go to God with requests and supplications: When indeed it is in God we live, and move, and have our being. We cannot draw a breath without his help. You need his help every day, for the supply of your outward wants; and especially you stand in continual need of him to help your souls. Without his protection they would immediately fall into the hands of the devil, who always stands as a roaring lion, ready, whenever he is permitted, to fall upon the souls of men and devour them. If God should indeed preserve your lives, but should otherwise forsake and leave you to yourselves, you would be most miserable: Your lives would be a curse to you.

Those that are converted, if God should forsake them, would soon fall away totally from a state of grace into a state far more miserable than ever they were in before their conversion. They have no strength of their own to resist those powerful enemies who surround them. Sin and Satan would immediately carry them away, as a mighty flood, if God should forsake them. You stand in need of daily supplies from God. Without God you can receive no spiritual light nor comfort, can exercise no grace, can bring forth no fruit. Without God your souls will wither and pine away, and sink into a most

wretched state. You continually need the instructions and directions of God. What can a little child do, in a vast howling wilderness, without some one to guide it, and to lead it in the right way? Without God you will soon fall into snares, and pits, and many fatal calamities.

Seeing therefore you stand in such continual need of the help of God, how reasonable is it that you should continually seek it of him, and perseveringly acknowledge your dependence upon him, by resorting to him, to spread your needs before him, and to offer up your requests to him in prayer..... Let us consider how miserable we should be, if we should leave off prayer, and God at the same time should leave off to take any care of us, or to afford us any more supplies of his grace. By our constancy in prayer, we cannot be profitable to God; and if we leave it off, God will sustain no damage: He doth not need our prayers; Job xxxv. 6, 7. But if God cease to care for us and to help us, we immediately sink: We can do nothing: We can receive nothing without him.

4. Consider the great benefit of a constant, diligent, and persevering attendance on this duty. It is one of the greatest and most excellent means of nourishing the new nature, and of causing the soul to flourish and prosper. It is an excellent mean of keeping up an acquaintance with God, and of growing in the knowledge of God. It is the way to a life of communion with God. It is an excellent mean of taking off the heart from the vanities of the world, and of causing the mind to be conversant in heaven. It is an excellent preservative from sin and the wiles of the devil, and a powerful antidote against the poison of the old serpent. It is a duty whereby strength is derived from God against the lusts and corruptions of the heart, and the snares of the world.

It hath a great tendency to keep the soul in a wakeful frame, and to lead us to a strict walk with God, and to a life that shall be fruitful in such good works, as tend to adorn the doctrine of Christ, and to cause our light so to shine before others, that they, seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father who is in heaven. And if the duty be constantly and diligently at-

tended, it will be a very pleasant duty. Slack and slothful attendance upon it, and unsteadiness in it, are the causes which make it so great a burden as it is to some persons. Their slothfulness in it hath naturally the effect to beget a dislike of the duty, and a great indisposition to it. But if it be constantly and diligently attended, it is one of the best means of leading, not only a Christian and amiable, but also a pleasant life; a life of much sweet fellowship with Christ, and of the abundant enjoyment of the light of his countenance.

Besides, the great power which prayer, when duly attended, hath with God, is worthy of your notice. By it men become like Jacob, who, as a prince, had power with God, and prevailed, when he wrestled with God for the blessing. See the power of prayer represented in James v. 16.....18. By these things you may be sensible how much you will lose, if you shall be negligent of this great duty of calling upon God; and how ill you will consult your own interest by such a neglect.

I conclude my discourse with two directions in order to constancy and perseverance in this duty.

1. Watch against the beginnings of a neglect of this duty. Persons who have for a time practised this duty, and afterwards neglect it, commonly leave it off by degrees. While their convictions and religious affections last, they are very constant in their closets, and no worldly business, or company, or diversion hinders them. But as their convictions and affections begin to die away, they begin to find excuses to neglect it sometimes. They are now so hurried; they have now such and such things to attend to; or there are now such inconveniences in the way, that they persuade themselves they may very excusably omit it for this time. Afterwards it pretty frequently so happens, that they have something to hinder, something which they call a just excuse. After a while, a less thing becomes a sufficient excuse than was allowed to be such at first. Thus the person by degrees contracts more and more of an habit of neglecting prayer, and becomes more and more indisposed to it. And even when he doth perform

it, it is in such a poor, dull, heartless, miserable manner, that he says to himself, he might as well not do it at all, as do it so. Thus he makes his own dulness and indisposition an excuse for wholly neglecting it, or at least for living in a great measure in the neglect of it. After this manner do Satan and men's own corruptions inveigle them to their ruin.

Therefore beware of the first beginnings of a neglect: Watch against temptations to it: Take heed how you begin to allow of excuses. Be watchful to keep up the duty in the height of it; let it not so much as begin to sink. For when you give way, though it be but little, it is like giving way to an enemy in the field of battle; the first beginning of a retreat greatly encourages the enemy, and weakens the retreating soldiers.

2. Let me direct you to forsake all such practices as you find by experience do indispose you to the duty of secret prayer. Examine the things in which you have allowed yourselves, and inquire whether they have had this effect. You are able to look over your past behavior, and may doubtless, on an impartial consideration, make a judgment of the practices and courses in which you have allowed yourselves.

Particularly let young people examine their manner of *company keeping*, and the round of diversions in which, with their companions, they have allowed themselves. I only desire that you would ask at the mouth of your own consciences what has been the effect of these things with respect to your attendance on the duty of secret prayer. Have you not found that such practices have tended to the neglect of this duty? Have you not found that after them you have been more indisposed to it, and less conscientious and careful to attend it? Yea have they not from time to time, actually been the means of your neglecting it?

If you cannot deny that this is really the case, then, if you seek the good of your souls, forsake these practices. Whatever you may plead for them, as that there is no hurt in them, or that there is a time for all things, and the like; yet if you find this hurt in the consequence of them, it is time for you

to forsake them. And if you value heaven more than a little worldly diversion; if you set an higher price on eternal glory than on a dance or a song, you will forsake them.

If these things be lawful in themselves, yet if your experience show, that they are attended with such a consequence as I have now mentioned, that is enough. It is lawful in itself for you to enjoy your right hand and your right eye: But if, by experience, you find they cause you to offend, it is time for you to cut off the one, and pluck out the other, as you would rather go to heaven without them than go to hell with them, into that place of torment where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

SERMON XXV.*

The Peace which Christ gives his true Followers.

JOHN xiv. 27.

PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU: NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU.

THESE words are a part of a most affectionate and affecting discourse that Christ had with his disciples the same evening in which he was betrayed, knowing that he was to be crucified the next day. This discourse begins with the 31st verse of the xiiith chapter, and is continued to the end of the xvith chapter. Christ began his discourse after he had partook of the passover with them, after he had instituted and administered the sacrament of the Supper, and after Judas was gone out, and none were left but his true and faithful disciples; whom he now addresses as his dear children. This was the last discourse that ever Christ had with them before his death. As it was his parting discourse, and as it were his dying discourse, so it is, on many accounts, the most remarkable of all the discourses of Christ which we have recorded in our Bibles.

* Dated August, 1750.

It is evident this discourse made a deep impression on the minds of the disciples; and we may suppose that it did so, in a special manner, on the mind of John, the beloved disciple, whose heart was especially full of love to him, and who had just then been leaning on his bosom. In this discourse Christ had told his dear disciples that he was going away, which filled them with sorrow and heaviness. The words of the text are some of the words which Christ said to comfort them, and to relieve their sorrow. He supports them with the promise of that peace which he would leave with them, and which they would have in him and with him, when he was gone.

This promise he delivers in three emphatical expressions, which illustrate one another. "Peace I leave with you." As much as to say, though I am going away, yet I will not take all comfort away with me. While I have been with you, I have been your support and comfort, and you have had peace in me in the midst of the losses you have sustained, and troubles you have met with in this evil generation. This peace I will not take from you, but leave it with you with great advantage, and in a more full possession.

"My peace I give unto you." Christ, by calling it HIS peace, signifies two things.

1. That it was his own, that which he had to give. It was the peculiar benefit that he had to bestow on his children; now he was about to die and leave the world as to his human presence. Silver and gold he had none: For while in his estate of humiliation he was poor. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head: Luke ix. 58. He had no earthly estate to leave to his disciples who were, as it were, his family: But he had peace to give them.

2. It was his peace that he gave them; as it was the same kind of peace which he himself enjoyed. The same excellent and divine peace which he ever had in God, and which he was about to receive in his exalted state in a vastly greater perfection and fullness: For the happiness Christ gives to his people, is a participation of his own happiness; agreeable to

what Christ says in this same dying discourse of his, chap. xv. 11. "These things have I said unto you, that my joy might remain in you." And in his prayer that he made with his disciples at the conclusion of this discourse. Chapter xvii. 13. "And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." And verse 22. "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them."

Christ here alludes to men's making their wills before death. When parents are about to leave their children by death, they are wont, in their last will and testament, to give them their estate; that estate which they themselves were wont to possess and enjoy. So it was with Christ when he was about to leave the world, with respect to the peace which he gave his disciples; only with this difference, that earthly parents, when they die, though they leave the same estate to their children which they themselves heretofore enjoyed; yet, when the children come to the full possession of it, they enjoy it no more; the parents do not enjoy it with their children. The time of the full possession of parents and children is not together. Whereas with respect to Christ's peace, he did not only possess it himself before his death, when he bequeathed it to his disciples; but also afterwards more fully; so that they were received to possess it with him.

The third and last expression is, "*not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*" Which is as much as to say, my gifts and legacies, now I am going to leave the world, are not like those which the rich and great men of the world are wont to leave to their heirs, when they die. They bequeath to their children their worldly possessions; and it may be, vast treasures of silver and gold, and sometimes an earthly kingdom. But the thing that I give you, is my peace, a vastly different thing from what they are wont to give, and which cannot be obtained by all that they can bestow, or their children inherit from them.

DOCTRINE.

That peace which Christ, when he died, left as a legacy to all his true saints, is very diverse from all those things which the men of this world bequeath to their children, when they die.

I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.

II. A great blessing that Christ made over to believers in this his testament was his peace.

III. This legacy of Christ is exceeding diverse from all that any of the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die.

I. Christ at his death made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were in a will or testament.

The new covenant is represented by the apostle as Christ's last will and testament. Heb. ix. 15, 16. "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." What men convey by their will or testament, is their own estate. So Christ in the new covenant conveys to believers his own inheritance, so far as they are capable of possessing and enjoying it. They have that eternal life given to them in their measure, which Christ himself possesses. They live in him, and with him, and by a participation of his life. *Because he lives they live also.* They inherit his kingdom; the same kingdom which the Father appointed unto him. Luke

xxii. 29. "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." They shall reign on his throne, Rev. iii. 21. They have his glory given to them, John xvii. And because all things are Christ's, so in Christ all things are also the saints,' 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

Men in their wills or testaments most commonly give their estates to their children: So believers are in scripture represented as Christ's children. Heb. ii. 13. "Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me." Men most commonly make their wills a little before their death: So Christ did, in a very special and solemn manner, make over and confirm to his disciples the blessings of the new covenant, on the evening before the day of his crucifixion, in that discourse of which my text is a part. The promises of the new covenant were never so particularly expressed, and so solemnly given forth by Christ in all the time that he was upon earth, as in this discourse. Christ promises them mansions in his Father's house, chap. xiv. 1, 2, 3. Here he promises them whatever blessings they should need and ask in his name. Chap. xv. 7. xiv. 23, 24. Here he does more solemnly and fully than any where else, give forth and confirm the promise of the Holy Spirit, which is the sum of the blessings of the covenant of grace. Chap. xiv. 16....xvii. 26....xv. 25....xvi. 7. Here he promises them his own and his Father's gracious presence and favor. Chap. xiv. 18....xix. 20, 21. Here he promises them peace in the text. Here he promises them his joy. Chap. xv. 11. Here he promises grace to bring forth holy fruits. Chap. xv. 11. And victory over the world. Chap. xvi. 33. And indeed there seems to be no where else so full and complete an edition of the covenant of grace in the whole Bible, as in this dying discourse of Christ with his eleven true disciples.

This covenant between Christ and his children is like a will or testament also in this respect, that it becomes effectual by, and no other way than by, his death; as the apostle observes it is with a will or testament among men. For a testament is of force after men are dead. Heb. ix. 17. For

though the covenant of grace indeed was of force before the death of Christ, yet it was of force no otherwise than by his death: So that his death then did virtually intervene; being already undertaken and engaged. As a man's heirs come by the legacies bequeathed to them no otherwise than by the death of the testator, so men come by the spiritual and eternal inheritance no otherwise than by the death of Christ. If it had not been for the death of Christ they never could have obtained it.

II. A great blessing that Christ, in his testament, hath bequeathed to his true followers, is his peace. Here are two things that I would observe particularly, viz. That Christ hath bequeathed to believers *true* peace; and then, that the peace he has given them is *his* peace.

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ has bequeathed true peace and comfort to his followers. Christ is called the Prince of Peace. Isai. ix. 6. And when he was born into the world, the angels, on that joyful and wonderful occasion, sang, Glory to God in the highest, on earth *peace*; because of that peace which he should procure for, and bestow on the children of men; peace with God, and peace one with another, and tranquillity and peace within themselves: Which last is especially the benefit spoken of in the text. This Christ has procured for his followers, and laid a foundation for their enjoyment of, in that he has procured for them the other two, viz. peace with God, and one with another. He has procured for them peace and reconciliation with God, and his favor and friendship; in that he satisfied for their sins, and laid a foundation for the perfect removal of the guilt of sin, and the forgiveness of all their trespasses, and wrought out for them a perfect and glorious righteousness, most acceptable to God, and sufficient to recommend them to God's full acceptance, and to the adoption of children, and to the eternal fruits of his fatherly kindness.

By these means true saints are brought into a state of freedom from condemnation, and all the curses of the law of God.

Rom. viii. 34. "Who is he that condemneth?" And by these means they are safe from that dreadful and eternal misery which naturally they are exposed to, and are set on high out of the reach of all their enemies, so that the gates of hell and powers of darkness can never destroy them; nor can wicked men, though they may persecute them, ever hurt them.... Rom. viii. 31. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Numb. xxiii. 8. "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed!" Verse 23. "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." By these means they are out of reach of death, John vi. 4....ix. 50, 51. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." By these means death with respect to them has lost its sting, and is no more worthy of the name of death. 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death where is thy sting?" By these means they have no need to be afraid of the day of judgment, when the heavens and earth shall be dissolved. Psal. xlvi. 1, 2. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed; and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Yea, a true saint has reason to be at rest in an assurance, that nothing can separate him from the love of God, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Thus he that is got into Christ, is in a safe refuge from every thing that might disturb him; for this is that man spoken of, Isai. xxxii. 2. "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: As rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And hence they that dwell in Christ have that promise fulfilled to them which we have in the 18th verse of the same chapter. "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

And the true followers of Christ have not only ground of rest and peace of soul, by reason of their safety from evil, but on account of their sure title and certain enjoyment of all that good which they stand in need of. living, dying, and through-

out all eternity. They are on a sure foundation for happiness, are built on a rock that can never be moved, and have a fountain that is sufficient, and can never be exhausted. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and God has passed his word and oath, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." The infinite Jehovah is become their God, who can do every thing for them. He is their portion who has an infinite fulness of good in himself. "He is their shield and exceeding great reward." As great a good is made over to them as they desire, or can desire or conceive of: Yea, as great and sweet as they are capable of; and to be continued as long as they desire; and this is made as sure as they can desire: Therefore they have reason to put their hearts at rest, and be at peace in their minds.

Besides, he has bequeathed peace to the souls of his people, as he has procured for them and made over to them, the spirit of grace and true holiness; which has a natural tendency to the peace and quietness of the soul. It has such a tendency as it implies a discovery and relish of a suitable and sufficient good. It brings a person into a view of divine beauty, and to a relish of that good which is a man's proper happiness; and so it brings the soul to its true centre. The soul by this means is brought to rest, and ceases from restlessly inquiring, as others do, who will shew us any good; and wandering to and fro, like lost sheep, seeking rest, and finding none. The soul hath found him who is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and sits down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto his taste. Cant. ii. 2. And thus is that saying of Christ fulfilled, John iv. 14. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." And besides, true grace naturally tends to peace and quietness, as it settles things in the soul in their due order, sets reason on the throne, and subjects the senses and affections to its government, which before were uppermost, and put all things into confusion and uproar in the soul.

Grace tends to tranquillity, as it mortifies tumultuous desires and passions, subdues the eager and insatiable appetites of the sensual nature and greediness after the vanities of the world. It mortifies such principles as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, envyings, and the like, which are a continual source of inward uneasiness and perturbation; and supplies those sweet, calming, and quieting principles of humility, meekness, resignation, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, and sweet reliance on God. It also tends to peace, as it fixes the aim of the soul to a certain end; so that the soul is no longer distracted and drawn contrariwise by opposite ends to be sought, and opposite portions to be obtained, and many masters of contrary wills and commands to be served; but the heart is fixed in the choice of one certain, sufficient, and unfailing good: And the soul's aim at this, and hope of it, is like an anchor to it, that keeps it stedfast, that it should no more be driven to and fro by every wind.

2. This peace, which Christ has left as a legacy to his true followers, is *his* peace. It is the peace which himself enjoys. This is what I take to be that which is principally intended in the expression. It is the peace that he enjoyed while on earth, in his state of humiliation: Though he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and was every where hated and persecuted by men and devils, and had no place of rest in this world; yet in God, his Father, he had peace. We read of his rejoicing in spirit, Luke x. 21. So Christ's true disciples, though in the world they have tribulation, yet in God have peace.

When Christ had finished his labors and sufferings, and rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, then he entered into his rest, and into a state of most blessed, perfect, and everlasting peace: Delivered by his own sufferings from our imputed guilt, acquitted and justified of the Father on his resurrection; having obtained a perfect victory over all his enemies; was received of his Father into heaven, the rest which he had prepared for him, there to enjoy his heart's desire

fully and perfectly to all eternity. And then were those words in the first six verses of the 21st Psalm, which have respect to Christ, fulfilled. This peace and rest of the Messiah is doubtless exceeding glorious. Isai. xi. 10. "And his rest shall be glorious." This rest is what Christ has procured, not only for himself, but also his people, by his death; and has bequeathed it to them, that they may enjoy it with him, imperfectly in this world, and perfectly and eternally in another world.

That peace, which has been described, which believers enjoy, is a participation of the peace which their glorious Lord and Master himself enjoys, by virtue of the same blood of Christ, by which Christ himself has entered into rest; it is in a participation of this same justification; for believers are justified with Christ. As he was justified when he rose from the dead, and as he was made free from our guilt, which he had as our surety, so believers are justified in him and through him. It is as being accepted of God in the same righteousness: It is in the favor of the same God and heavenly Father that they enjoy peace. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." It is in a participation of the same spirit; for believers have the spirit of Christ. He had the spirit given to him not by measure, and of his fulness do they all receive, and grace for grace. As the oil, poured on the head of Aaron, went down to the skirts of his garments, so the spirit poured on Christ, the head, descends to all his members. It is partaking of the same grace of the spirit that believers enjoy this peace, John i. 16.

It is as being united to Christ, and living by a participation of his life, as a branch lives by the life of the vine. It is as partaking of the same love of God. John xvii. 26. "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." It is as having a part with him in his victory over the same enemies: And also as having an interest in the same kind of eternal rest and peace. Eph. ii. 5, 6. "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ....and hath

raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places."

III. This legacy of Christ to his true disciples is very diverse from all that the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die. The men of this world, many of them, when they come to die, have great estates to bequeath to their children, an abundance of the good things of this world, large tracts of ground, perhaps in a fruitful soil, covered with flocks and herds. They sometimes leave to their children stately mansions, and vast treasures of silver, gold, jewels, and precious things, fetched from both the Indies, and from every side of the globe of the earth. They leave them wherewith to live in much state and magnificence, and make a great show among men, to fare very sumptuously, and swim in worldly pleasures. Some have crowns, sceptres, and palaces, and great monarchies to leave to their heirs. But none of these things are to be compared to that blessed peace of Christ which he has bequeathed to his true followers. These things are such as God commonly, in his Providence, gives his worst enemies, those whom he hates and despises most. But Christ's peace is a precious benefit, which he reserves for his peculiar favorites. These worldly things, even the best of them, that the men and princes of the world leave for their children, are things which God in his Providence throws out to those whom he looks on as dogs; but Christ's peace is the bread of his children. All these earthly things are but empty shadows, which, however men set their hearts upon them, are not bread, and can never satisfy their souls; but this peace of Christ is a truly substantial, satisfying food. Isai. lv. 2. None of those things, if men have them to the best advantage, and in ever so great abundance, can give true peace and rest to the soul, as is abundantly manifest not only in reason, but experience; it being found in all ages, that those who have the most of them, have commonly the least quietness of mind. It is true, there may be a kind of quietness, a false peace they may have in their enjoyment of worldly things; men may

bless their souls, and think themselves the only happy persons, and despise others ; may say to their souls, as the rich man did, Luke xii. 19. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But Christ's peace, which he gives to his true disciples, vastly differs from this peace that men may have in the enjoyments of the world, in the following respects :

1. Christ's peace is a reasonable peace and rest of soul ; it is what has its foundation in light and knowledge, in the proper exercises of reason, and a right view of things ; whereas the peace of the world is founded in blindness and delusion. The peace that the people of Christ have, arises from their having their eyes open, and seeing things as they be. The more they consider, and the more they know of the truth and reality of things, the more they know what is true concerning themselves, the state and condition they are in ; the more they know of God, and the more certain they are that there is a God, and the more they know what manner of being he is, the more certain they are of another world and future judgment, and of the truth of God's threatenings and promises ; the more their consciences are awakened and enlightened, and the brighter and the more searching the light is that they see things in, the more is their peace established : Whereas, on the contrary, the peace that the men of the world have in their worldly enjoyments can subsist no otherwise than by their being kept in ignorance. They must be blindfolded and deceived, otherwise they can have no peace : Do but let light in upon their consciences, so that they may look about them and see what they are, and what circumstances they are in, and it will at once destroy all their quietness and comfort. Their peace can live no where but in the dark. Light turns their ease into torment. The more they know what is true concerning God and concerning themselves, the more they are sensible of the truth concerning those enjoyments which they possess ; and the more they are sensible what things now are, and what things are like to be hereafter, the more will their calm be turned into a storm. The worldly man's peace cannot be

maintained but by avoiding consideration and reflection. If he allows himself to think, and properly to exercise his reason, it destroys his quietness and comfort. If he would establish his carnal peace, it concerns him to put out the light of his mind, and turn beast as fast as he can. The faculty of reason, if at liberty, proves a mortal enemy to his peace. It concerns him, if he would keep alive his peace, to contrive all ways that may be, to stupify his mind and deceive himself, and to imagine things to be otherwise than they be. But with respect to the peace which Christ gives, reason is its great friend. The more this faculty is exercised, the more it is established. The more they consider and view things with truth and exactness, the firmer is their comfort, and the higher their joy. How vast a difference is there between the peace of a Christian and the worldling! How miserable are they who cannot enjoy peace any otherwise than by hiding their eyes from the light, and confining themselves to darkness; whose peace is properly stupidity; as the ease that a man has who has taken a dose of stupifying poison, and the ease and pleasure that a drunkard may have in an house on fire over his head, or the joy of a distracted man in thinking that he is a king, though a miserable wretch confined in bedlam: Whereas, the peace that Christ gives his true disciples, is the light of life, something of the tranquillity of heaven, the peace of the celestial paradise, that has the glory of God to lighten it.

2. Christ's peace is a virtuous and holy peace. The peace that the men of the world enjoy is vicious; it is a vile stupidity, that depraves and debases the mind, and makes men brutish. But the peace that the saints enjoy in Christ, is not only their comfort, but it is a part of their beauty and dignity. The Christian tranquillity, rest, and joy of real saints, are not only unspeakable privileges, but they are virtues and graces of God's Spirit, wherein the image of God in them does partly consist. This peace has its source in those principles that are in the highest degree virtuous and amiable, such as poverty of spirit, holy resignation, trust in God, divine love, meek-

ness, and charity ; the exercise of such blessed fruits of the spirit as are spoken of, Gal. v. 22, 23.

3. This peace greatly differs from that which is enjoyed by the men of the world, with regard to its exquisite sweetness. It is a peace that passes all that natural men enjoy in worldly things so much, that it passes their understanding and conception. Phil. iv. 7. It is exquisitely sweet, because it has so firm a foundation as the everlasting rock that never can be moved. It is sweet, because perfectly agreeable to reason. It is sweet, because it rises from holy and divine principles, that as they are the virtue, so they are the proper happiness of men.

It is exquisitely sweet, because of the greatness of the objective good that the saints enjoy, and have peace and rest in, being no other than the infinite bounty and fullness of that God who is the fountain of all good. It is sweet, on account of the fullness and perfection of that provision that is made for it in Christ and the new covenant, where there is a foundation laid for the saints' perfect peace ; and hereafter they shall actually enjoy perfect peace ; and though their peace is not now perfect, it is not owing to any defect in the provision made, but in their own imperfection and misery, sin and darkness ; and because as yet they do partly cleave to the world and seek peace from thence, and do not perfectly cleave to Christ. But the more they do so, and the more they see of the provision there is made, and accept of it, and cleave to that alone, the nearer are they brought to perfect tranquillity. Isaiah xxvi. 5.

4. The peace of the Christian infinitely differs from that of the worldling, in that it is unfailing and eternal peace. That peace which carnal men have in the things of the world, is, according to the foundation it is built upon, of short continuance ; like the comfort of a dream, 1 John, ii. 17. 1 Cor. vii. 31. These things, the best and most durable of them, are like bubbles on the face of the water ; they vanish in a moment, Hos. x. 7.

But the foundation of the Christian's peace is everlasting; it is what no time, no change, can destroy. It will remain when the body dies; it will remain when the mountains depart and the hills shall be removed, and when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. The fountain of his comfort shall never be diminished, and the stream shall never be dried. His comfort and joy is a living spring in the soul, a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of this doctrine, is to improve it, as an inducement unto all to forsake the world, no longer seeking peace and rest in its vanities, and to cleave to Christ and follow him. Happiness and rest are what all men are in pursuit of. But the things of the world, wherein most men seek it, can never afford it; they are laboring and spending themselves in vain. But Christ invites you to come to him, and offers you this peace which he gives his true followers, that so much excels all that the world can afford. Isa. lv. 2, 3.

You that have hitherto spent your time in the pursuit of satisfaction and peace in the profit or glory of the world, or in the pleasures and vanities of youth, have this day an offer made to you of that excellent and everlasting peace and blessedness, which Christ has purchased with the price of his own blood, and bestows only on those that are his peculiar favorites, his redeemed ones, that are his portion and treasure, the objects of his everlasting love. As long as you continue to reject those offers and invitations of Christ, and continue in a Christless condition, you never will enjoy any true peace or comfort; but in whatever circumstances you are, you will be miserable; you will be like the prodigal, that in vain endeavored to fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: The wrath of God will abide upon, and misery will attend you wherever you go, which you never will, by any means, be able

to escape. Christ gives peace to the most sinful and miserable that come to him. He heals the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. But it is impossible that they should have peace, that continue in their sins. Isa. lvii. 19, 20, 21. There is no peace between God and them ; as they have the guilt of sin remaining in their souls, and are under the dominion of sin, so God's indignation continually burns against them, and therefore there is reason why they should travail in pain all their days.

While you continue in such a state, you live in a state of dreadful uncertainty what will become of you, and in continual danger. When you are in the enjoyment of things that are the most pleasing to you, where your heart is best suited, and most cheerful, yet you are in a state of condemnation, hanging over the infernal pit, with the sword of divine vengeance hanging over your head, having no security one moment from utter and remediless destruction. What reasonable peace can any one enjoy in such a state as this. What does it signify to take such an one and clothe him in gorgeous apparel, or to set him on a throne, or at a prince's table, and feed him with the rarest dainties the earth affords ? And how miserable is the ease and cheerfulness that such have ! What a poor kind of comfort and joy is it that such take in their wealth and pleasures for a moment, while they are the prisoners of divine justice, and wretched captives of the devil, and have none to befriend them or defend them, being without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world !

I invite you now to a better portion. There are better things provided for the sinful miserable children of men. There is a surer comfort and more durable peace : Comfort that you may enjoy in a state of safety and on a sure foundation : A peace and rest that you may enjoy with reason and with your eyes open ; having all your sins forgiven, your greatest and most aggravated transgressions blotted out as a cloud, and buried as

in the depths of the sea, that they may never be found more; and being not only forgiven, but accepted to favor; being the objects of God's complacence and delight; being taken into God's family and made his children; and having good evidence that your names were written on the heart of Christ before the world was made, and that you have an interest in that covenant of grace that is well ordered in all things and sure; wherein is promised no less than life and immortality, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, a crown of glory that fades not away; being in such circumstances, that nothing shall be able to prevent your being happy to all eternity; having for the foundation of your hope, that love of God which is from eternity unto eternity; and his promise and oath, and his omnipotent power, things infinitely firmer than mountains of brass. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yea, the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, yet these things will never be abolished.

In such a state as this you will have a foundation of peace and rest through all changes, and in times of the greatest uproar and outward calamity be defended from all storms, and dwell above the floods. Psalm xxxii. 6, 7, and you shall be at peace with every thing, and God will make all his creatures throughout all parts of his dominion, to befriend you. Job v. 19, 24. You need not be afraid of any thing that your enemies can do unto you, Psalm iii. 5, 6. Those things that now are most terrible to you, viz. death, judgment, and eternity, will then be most comfortable, the most sweet and pleasant objects of your contemplation, at least there will be reason that they should be so. Hearken therefore to the friendly counsel that is given you this day, turn your feet into the way of peace, forsake the foolish and live; forsake those things which are no other than the devil's baits, and seek after this excellent peace and rest of Jesus Christ, that peace of God which passes all understanding. Taste and see; never was any disappointed that made a trial. Prov. xxiv. 13, 14. You

will not only find those spiritual comforts that Christ offers you to be of a surpassing sweetness for the present, but they will be to your soul as the dawning light that shines more and more to the perfect day ; and the issue of all will be your arrival in heaven, that land of rest, those regions of everlasting joy, where your peace and happiness will be perfect, without the least mixture of trouble or affliction, and never be interrupted nor have an end.

SERMON XXVI.

The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath.

1 CORINTHIANS xvi. 1, 2.

NOW CONCERNING THE COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS, AS I HAVE GIVEN ORDER TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA, EVEN SO DO YE. UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, LET EVERY ONE OF YOU LAY BY HIM IN STORE, AS GOD HATH PROSPERED HIM, THAT THERE BE NO GATHERINGS WHEN I COME.

WE find in the New Testament often mentioned a certain collection, which was made by the Grecian churches, for the brethren in Judea, who were reduced to pinching want by a dearth which then prevailed, and was the heavier upon them by reason of their circumstances, they having been from the beginning oppressed and persecuted by the unbelieving Jews....We have this collection or contribution twice mentioned in the Acts, as in chapter xi. 28....31, and in chapter xxiv. 17. It is also taken notice of in several of the epistles; as Rom. xv. 26, and Gal. ii. 10. But it is most largely insisted on, in these two epistles to the Corinthians; in this first epistle, chapter xvi. and in the second epistle, chapter viii. and ix.

The apostle begins the directions, which in this place he delivers concerning this matter, with the words of the text.... wherein we may observe,

1. What is the thing to be done concerning which the apostle gives them direction, and that is, the making of a collection for the saints; the exercise and manifestation of their charity towards their brethren, by communicating to them, for the supply of their wants; which was by Christ and his apostles often spoken of and insisted on, as one main duty of the Christian religion, and is expressly declared to be so by the Apostle James, chap. i. 27. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

2. We may observe the time on which the apostle directs that this should be done, viz. "on the first day of the week." By the inspiration of the Holy Ghost he insists upon it, that it be done on such a particular day of the week, as if no other day would do so well as that, or were so proper and fit a time for such a work. Thus, although the inspired apostle was not for making that distinction of days in gospel times, which the Jews made, as appears by Gal. iv. 10. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain;" yet here he gives the preference to one day of the week, before any other, for the performance of a certain great duty of Christianity.

3. It may be observed, that this is the direction which the apostle had given to other churches that were concerned in the same duty, upon this occasion: He had given direction to them also to do it on the first day of the week: "As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye." Whence we may learn, that it was nothing peculiar in the circumstances of the Christians at Corinth, which was the reason why the Holy Ghost insisted that they should perform this duty on this day of the week. The apostle had given the like orders to the churches of Galatia.

Now Galatia was far distant from Corinth ; the sea parted them ; and besides that, there were several other countries between them. Therefore it cannot be thought that the Holy Ghost directs them to this time upon any secular account, having respect to some particular circumstances of the people in that city, but upon a religious account. In giving the preference to this day for such work, before any other day, he has respect to something which reached all Christians throughout the wide world.

And by other passages of the New Testament, we learn that the case was the same as to other exercises of religion ; and that in the age of the apostles, the first day of the week was preferred before any other day, among the primitive Christians, and in churches immediately under the care of the apostles, for an attendance on the exercises of religion in general. Acts xx. 7. " Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." It seems by these things to have been among the primitive Christians in the apostles' days, with respect to the first day of the week, as it was among the Jews with respect to the seventh.

We are taught by Christ, that the doing of alms and showing of mercy are proper works for the sabbath day. When the Pharisees found fault with Christ for suffering his disciples to pluck the ears of corn and eat on the sabbath, Christ corrects them with that, " I will have mercy and not sacrifice," Matth. xii. 7. And Christ teaches that works of mercy are proper to be done on the Sabbath, in Luke xiii. 15, 16, and xiv. 5. These works used to be done on sacred festivals and days of rejoicing, under the Old Testament, as in Nehemiah's and Esther's time ; Neh. viii. 10, and Esth. ix. 19, 22. And *Josephus* and *Philo*, two very noted Jews, who wrote not long after Christ's time, give an account that it was the manner among the Jews on the Sabbath, to make collections for sacred and pious uses.

DOCTRINE.

It is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be especially set apart among Christians, for religious exercises and duties.

That this is the doctrine which the Holy Ghost intended to teach us, by this and some other passages of the New Testament, I hope will appear plainly by the sequel. This is a doctrine that we have been generally brought up in by the instructions and examples of our ancestors; and it is and has been the general profession of the Christian world, that this day ought to be religiously observed and distinguished from other days of the week. However some deny it. Some refuse to take any notice of the day, or any way to difference it from other days. Others own, that it is a laudable custom of the Christian church, into which she fell by agreement, and by appointment of her ordinary rulers, to set apart this day for public worship. But they deny any other original to such an observation of the day, than prudential human appointment. Others religiously observe the Jewish Sabbath, suppose that the institution of that is of perpetual obligation, and that we want foundation for determining that that is abrogated, and another day of the week is appointed in the room of the seventh.

All these classes of men say, that there is no clear revelation that it is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be observed as a day to be set apart for religious exercises, in the room of the ancient Sabbath; which there ought to be in order to the observation of it by the Christian church, as a divine institution. They say, that we ought not to go upon the tradition of past ages, or upon uncertain and far fetched inferences from some passages of the history of the New Testament, or upon some obscure and uncertain hints in the apostles' writings; but that we ought to expect a

plain institution; which, they say, we may conclude God would have given us, if he had designed that the whole Christian church, in all ages, should observe another day of the week for an holy Sabbath, than that which was appointed of old by plain and positive institution.

So far is undoubtedly true, that if this be the mind and will of God, he hath not left the matter to human tradition; but hath so revealed his mind about it, in his word, that there is there to be found good and substantial evidence that it is his mind: And doubtless, the revelation is plain enough for them that have ears to hear; that is, for them that will justly exercise their understandings about what God says to them. No Christian, therefore, should rest till he has satisfactorily discovered the mind of God in this matter. If the Christian Sabbath be of divine institution, it is doubtless of great importance to religion that it be well kept; and therefore, that every Christian be well acquainted with the institution.

If men only take it upon trust, and keep the first day of the week only because their parents taught them so, or because they see others do so, and so they take it for certain that it is right; they will never be likely to keep it so conscientiously and strictly, as if they had seen with their own eyes, and had been convinced by seeing for themselves, good grounds in the word of God for their practice: And unless they do see thus for themselves, whenever they are negligent in sanctifying the Sabbath, or are guilty of profaning it; their consciences will not have that advantage to smite them for it, as otherwise they would. And those who have a sincere desire to obey God in all things, will keep the Sabbath more carefully and more cheerfully, if they have seen and been convinced that therein they do what is according to the will and command of God, and what is acceptable to him; and will also have a great deal more comfort in the reflection upon their having carefully and painfully kept the Sabbath.

Therefore, I design now, by the help of God, to show, that it is sufficiently revealed in the scriptures, to be the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be distin-

guished in the Christian church from other days of the week, as a Sabbath, to be devoted to religious exercises.

In order to this, I shall here premise, that the mind and will of God, concerning any duty to be performed by us, may be sufficiently revealed in his word, without a particular precept in so many express terms, enjoining it. The human understanding is the ear to which the word of God is spoken; and if it be so spoken, that that ear may plainly hear it, it is enough. God is sovereign as to the manner of speaking his mind, whether he will speak it in express terms, or whether he will speak it by saying several other things which imply it, and from which we may, by comparing them together, plainly perceive it. If the mind of God be but revealed, if there be but sufficient means for the communication of his mind to our minds, that is sufficient; whether we hear so many express words with our ears, or see them in writing with our eyes; or whether we see the thing that he would signify to us, by the eye of reason and understanding.

Who can positively say, that if it had been the mind of God, that we should keep the first day of the week, he would have commanded it in express terms, as he did the observation of the seventh day of old? Indeed, if God had so made our faculties, that we were not capable of receiving a revelation of his mind in any other way; then there would have been some reason to say so. But God hath given us such understandings, that we are capable of receiving a revelation, when made in another manner. And if God deals with us agreeably to our natures, and in a way suitable to our capacities, it is enough. If God discovers his mind in any way whatsoever, provided it be according to our faculties, we are obliged to obedience; and God may expect our notice and observance of his revelation, in the same manner as if he had revealed it in express terms.

I shall speak upon this subject under these two general propositions:

1. It is sufficiently clear, that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest, and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations.

2. It is sufficiently clear, that under the gospel dispensation, this day is the first day of the week.

I. Proposition. It is sufficiently clear, that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest, and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations; and not only among the ancient Israelites, till Christ came, but even in these gospel times, and among all nations professing Christianity.

1. From the consideration of the nature and state of mankind in this world, it is most consonant to human reason, that certain fixed parts of time should be set apart, to be spent by the church wholly in religious exercises, and in the duties of divine worship. It is a duty incumbent on all mankind, in all ages alike, to worship and serve God. His service should be our great business. It becomes us to worship him with the greatest devotion and engagedness of mind; and therefore to put ourselves, at proper times, in such circumstances, as will most contribute to render our minds entirely devoted to this work, without being diverted or interrupted by other things.

The state of mankind in this world is such, that we are called to concern ourselves in secular business and affairs, which will necessarily, in a considerable degree, take up the thoughts and engage the attention of the mind. However some particular persons may be in such circumstances as to be more free and disengaged; yet the state of mankind is such, that the bulk of them, in all ages and nations, are called ordinarily to exercise their thoughts about secular affairs, and to follow worldly business, which, in its own nature, is remote from the solemn duties of religion.

It is therefore most meet and suitable, that certain times should be set apart, upon which men should be required to

throw by all other concerns, that their minds may be the more freely and entirely engaged in spiritual exercises, in the duties of religion, and in the immediate worship of God; and that their minds being disengaged from common concerns, their religion may not be mixed with them.

It is also suitable that these times should be fixed and settled, that the church may agree therein, and that they should be the same for all, that men may not interrupt one another; but may rather assist one another by mutual example: For example has a great influence in such cases. If there be a time set apart for public rejoicing, and there be a general manifestation of joy, the general example seems to inspire men with a spirit of joy and mirth; one kindles another. So, if it be a time of mourning, and there be general appearances and manifestations of sorrow, it naturally affects the mind, it disposes it to depression, it casts a gloom upon it, and does as it were dull and deaden the spirits....So, if a certain time be set apart as holy time, for general devotion, and solemn religious exercises, a general example tends to render the spirit serious and solemn.

2. Without doubt, one proportion of time is better and fitter than another for this purpose. One proportion is more suitable to the state of mankind, and will have a greater tendency to answer the ends of such times, than another. The times may be too far asunder; I think human reason is sufficient to discover, that it would be too seldom for the purposes of such solemn times, that they should be but once a year. So, I conclude, no body will deny, but that such times may be too near together to agree with the state and necessary affairs of mankind.

Therefore, there can be no difficulty in allowing, that some certain proportion of time, whether we can exactly discover it or not, is really fittest and best; and considering all things, considering the end for which such times are kept, and the condition, circumstances, and necessary affairs of men, and considering what the state of man is, taking one age and nation with another, that one proportion of time is more conve-

nient and suitable than any other; which God may know and exactly determine, though we, by reason of the scantiness of our understandings, cannot.

As a certain frequency of the returns of these times may be more suitable than any other, so one length or continuance of the times themselves may be fitter than another, to answer the purposes of such times. If such times, when they come, were to last but an hour, it would not well answer the end; for then worldly things would crowd too nearly upon sacred exercises, and there would not be that opportunity to get the mind so thoroughly free and disengaged from other things, as there would be, if the times were longer. But they being so short, sacred and profane things would be as it were mixed together. Therefore, a certain distance between these times, and a certain continuance of them when they come, is more proper than others; which God knows and is able to determine, though perhaps we cannot.

3. It is unreasonable to suppose any other, than that God's working six days, and resting the seventh, and blessing and hallowing it, was to be of general use in determining this matter, and that it is written, that the practice of mankind in general might some way or other be regulated by it. What could be the meaning of God's resting the seventh day, and hallowing and blessing it, which he did, before the giving of the fourth commandment, unless he hallowed and blessed it with respect to mankind? For he did not bless and sanctify it with respect to himself, or that he himself and within himself might observe it; as that is most absurd. And it is unreasonable to suppose that he hallowed it only with respect to the Jews, a particular nation, which rose up above two thousand years after.

So much therefore must be intended by it, that it was his mind, that mankind should, after his example, work six days, and then rest, and hallow or sanctify the next following; and that they should sanctify every seventh day, or that the space between rest and rest, one hallowed time and another, among his creatures here upon earth, should be six days. So that it

hence appears to be the mind and will of God, that not only the Jews, but men in all nations and ages, should sanctify one day in seven; which is the thing we are endeavoring to prove.

4. The mind of God in this matter is clearly revealed in the fourth commandment. The will of God is there revealed, not only that the Israelitish nation, but that all nations, should keep every seventh day holy; or, which is the same thing, one day after every six. This command, as well as the rest, is doubtless everlasting and of perpetual obligation, at least, as to the substance of it, as is intimated by its being engraven on the tables of stone. Nor is it to be thought that Christ ever abolished any command of the ten; but that there is the complete number TEN yet, and will be to the end of the world.

Some say, that the fourth command is perpetual, but not in its literal sense, not as designing any particular proportion of time to be set apart and devoted to literal rest and religious exercises. They say, that it is abolished in that sense, and stands in force only in a mystical sense, viz. as that weekly rest of the Jews typified spiritual rest in the Christian church. And so, they say, that we under the gospel, are not to make any distinction of one day from another, but are to keep all time holy, doing every thing in a spiritual manner.

But this is an absurd way of interpreting the command, as it refers to Christians. For if the command be so far abolished, it is entirely abolished. For it is the very design of the command, to fix the time of worship. The first command fixes the object, the second, the means, the third, the manner, the fourth, the time. And, if it stands in force now only as signifying a spiritual, Christian rest, and holy behavior at all times, it doth not remain as one of the ten commands, but as a summary of all the commands.

The main objection against the perpetuity of this command is, that the duty required is not MORAL. Those laws whose obligation arises from the nature of things, and from the general state and nature of mankind, as well as from God's

positive revealed will, are called MORAL laws. Others, whose obligation depends merely upon God's positive and arbitrary institution, are not moral; such as the ceremonial laws, and the precepts of the gospel, about the two sacraments. Now, the objectors say, they will allow all that is moral in the decalogue to be of perpetual obligation; but this command, they say, is not moral.

But this objection is weak and insufficient for the purpose for which it is brought, or to prove that the fourth command, as to the substance of it, is not of perpetual obligation. For,

(1.) If it should be allowed that there is no morality belonging to the command, and that the duty required is founded merely on arbitrary institution, it cannot therefore be certainly concluded that the command is not perpetual. We know that there may be commands in force under the gospel, and to the end of the world, which are not moral: Such are the institutions of the two sacraments. And why may there not be positive commands in force in all ages of the church? If positive, arbitrary institutions are in force in gospel times, what is there which concludes that no positive precept given before the times of the gospel can yet continue in force? But,

(2.) As we have observed already, the thing in general, that there should be certain fixed parts of time set apart to be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the fitness of the thing, arising from the nature of things, and the nature and universal state of mankind. Therefore, there is as much reason that there should be a command of perpetual and universal obligation about this, as about any other duty whatsoever. For if the thing in general, that there be a time fixed, be founded in the nature of things, there is consequent upon it a necessity, that the time be limited by a command; for there must be a proportion of time fixed, or else the general moral duty cannot be observed.

(3.) The particular determination of the proportion of time in the fourth commandment, is also founded in the nature of things, only our understandings are not sufficient absolutely to determine it of themselves. We have observed

already, that without doubt one proportion of time is in itself fitter than another, and a certain continuance of time fitter than any other, considering the universal state and nature of mankind; which God may see, though our understandings are not perfect enough absolutely to determine it. So that the difference between this command and others, doth not lie in this, that other commands are founded in the fitness of the things themselves, arising from the universal state and nature of mankind, and this not: But only in this, that the fitness of other commands is more obvious to the understandings of men, and they might have seen it of themselves; but this could not be precisely discovered and positively determined without the assistance of revelation.

So that the command of God, that every seventh day should be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the universal state and nature of mankind, as well as other commands; only man's reason is not sufficient, without divine direction, so exactly to determine it: Though perhaps man's reason is sufficient to determine, that it ought not to be much seldomer, nor much oftener than once in seven days.

5. It further confirms it, that it is the mind and will of God, that such a weekly Sabbath should forever be kept, that God appears in his word as laying abundantly more weight on this precept concerning the Sabbath, than on any precept of the ceremonial law; not only by inserting it in the decalogue, and making it one of the ten commands, which were delivered by God with an audible voice, by writing it with his own finger on the tables of stone, which were the work of God in the mount, and by appointing it afterwards to be written on the tables which Moses made; but as the keeping of the weekly Sabbath is spoken of by the prophets, as that wherein consists a great part of holiness of life; and as it is inserted among moral duties, as particularly in Isa. lviii. 13, 14. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking

thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

6. It is foretold, that this command should be observed in gospel times; as in Isa. lvi. at the beginning, where the due observation of the Sabbath is spoken of as a great part of holiness of life, and is placed among moral duties. It is also mentioned as a duty that should be most acceptable to God from his people, even where the prophet is speaking of gospel times; as in the foregoing chapter, and in the first verse of this chapter. And, in the 3d and 4th verses, the prophet is speaking of the abolition of the ceremonial law in gospel times, and particularly of that law, which forbids eunuchs to come into the congregation of the Lord. Yet, here the man is pronounced *blessed, who keeps the Sabbath from polluting it*, verse 2. And even in the very sentence where the eunuchs are spoken of as being free from the ceremonial law, they are spoken of as being yet under obligation to keep the Sabbath, and their keeping of it, as that which God lays great weight upon: "For, thus saith the Lord, unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant: Even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

Besides, the strangers spoken of in the 6th and 7th verses, are the Gentiles, that should be called in the times of the gospel, as is evident by the last clause in the 7th, and by the 8th verse: "For mine house shall be called an house of prayer *for all people*. The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, *besides those that are gathered unto him*." Yet it is represented here as their duty to keep the Sabbath: "Also the *sons of the stranger*, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, *every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it*, and taketh hold of my

covenant: even *them will I bring* to my holy mountain, and *make them joyful in my house of prayer*."

7. A further argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, we have in Matth xxiv. 20. "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, *neither on the Sabbath day*." Christ is here speaking of the flight of the apostles and other Christians out of Jerusalem and Judea, just before their final destruction, as is manifest by the whole context, and especially by the 16th verse: "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." But this final destruction of Jerusalem was after the dissolution of the Jewish constitution, and after the Christian dispensation was fully set up. Yet, it is plainly implied in these words of our Lord, that even then Christians were bound to a strict observation of the Sabbath.

Thus I have shewn, that it is the will of God, that every seventh day be devoted to rest and to religious exercises.

I proceed now to the

II. PROPOSITION. That it is the will of God, that under the gospel dispensation, or in the Christian church, this day should be the FIRST day of the week.

In order to the confirmation of this, let the following things be considered.

1. The words of the fourth commandment afford no objection against this being the day that should be the Sabbath, any more than against any other day. That this day, which, according to the Jewish reckoning, is the first of the week, should be kept as a Sabbath, is no more opposite to any sentence or word of the fourth command, than that the seventh of the week should be the day; and that because the words of the fourth command do not determine which day of the week we should keep as a Sabbath; they merely determine this, that we should rest and keep as a Sabbath every seventh day, or one day after every six. It says, SIX DAYS THOU SHALT LABOR, AND THE SEVENTH THOU SHALT REST; which implies no more, than that after six days of labor, we shall, upon

the next to the sixth, rest and keep it holy. And so, to be sure, we are obliged to do forever. But the words no way determine where those six days shall begin, and so where the rest or Sabbath shall fall. There is no direction in the fourth command how to reckon the time, i. e. where to begin and end it. That is not meddled with in the fourth command, but is supposed to be determined otherwise.

The Jews did not know, by the fourth command, where to begin their six days, and on which particular day to rest; this was determined by another precept. The fourth command does indeed suppose a particular day appointed; but it does not appoint any. It requires us to rest and keep holy a seventh day, one after every six of labor, which particular day God either had or should appoint. The particular day was determined for that nation in another place, viz. in Exod. xvi. 23, 25, 26. "And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, TOMORROW is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: Bake that which ye will bake, today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning.....And Moses said, Eat that today, for TODAY IS A SABBATH UNTO THE LORD: Today ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the SEVENTH DAY, WHICH IS THE SABBATH, in it there shall be none." This is the first place where we have any mention made of the Sabbath, from the first Sabbath on which God rested.

It seems that the Israelites, in the time of their bondage in Egypt had lost the true reckoning of time by the days of the week, reckoning from the first day of the creation, if it had been kept up till that time. They were slaves, and in cruel bondage, and had, in a great measure, forgotten the true religion: For we are told, that they served the gods of Egypt. And it is not to be supposed, that the Egyptians would suffer their slaves to rest from their work every seventh day. Now, they having remained in bondage for so long a time, had probably lost the weekly reckoning; therefore, when God had brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness, he made

known to them the Sabbath, on the occasion, and in the manner recorded in the text just now quoted. Hence, we read in Nehemiah, that when God had led the children of Israel out of Egypt, &c. he made known unto them his holy Sabbath; Neh. ix. 14. "And madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath." To the same effect, we read in Ezek. xx. 10, 12. "Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. Moreover also, I gave them my Sabbaths."

But they never would have known where the particular day would have fallen by the fourth command. Indeed, the fourth command, as it was spoken to the Jews, did refer to their Jewish Sabbath. But that doth not prove, that that day was determined and appointed by it. The precept in the fourth command is to be taken generally of a seventh day, such a seventh day as God should appoint, or had appointed. And because such a particular day had been already appointed for the Jewish church; therefore, as it was spoken to them, it did refer to that particular day. But this doth not prove, but that the same words refer to another appointed seventh day, now in the Christian church. The words of the fourth command may oblige the church, under different dispensations, to observe different appointed seventh days, as well as the fifth command may oblige different persons to honor different fathers and mothers.

The Christian Sabbath, in the sense of the fourth command, is as much the seventh day, as the Jewish Sabbath; because it is kept every seventh day, as much as that; it is kept after six days of labor as well as that; it is the seventh, reckoning from the beginning of our first working day, as well as that was the seventh from the beginning of their first working day. All the difference is, that the seven days formerly began from the day after God's rest from the creation, and now they begin the day after that. It is no matter by what names the days are called: If our nation had, for instance, called Wednesday the first of the week, it would have been all one as to this argument.

Therefore, by the institution of the Christian Sabbath, there is no change from the fourth command ; but the change is from another law, which determined the beginning and ending of their working days. So that those words of the fourth command, viz. " Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work ; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God ;" afford no objection against that which is called the Christian Sabbath ; for these words remain in full force still. Neither does any just objection arise from these words following, viz. " For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." These words are not made insignificant to Christians, by the institution of the Christian Sabbath ; They still remain in their full force as to that which is principally intended by them. They were designed to give us a reason why we are to work but six days at a time, and then rest on the seventh, because God hath set us the example. And taken so, they remain still in as much force as ever they were. This is the reason still, as much as ever it was, why we may work but six days at a time. What is the reason that Christians rest every seventh, and not every eighth, or every ninth, or tenth day ? It is because God worked six days and rested the seventh.

It is true, these words did carry something further in their meaning, as they were spoken to the Jews, and to the church, before the coming of Christ : It was then also intended by them, that the seventh day was to be kept in commemoration of the work of creation. But this is no objection to the supposition, that the words, as they relate to us, do not import all that they did, as they related to the Jews. For there are other words which were written upon those tables of stone with the ten commandments, which are known and allowed not to be of the same import, as they relate to us, which they were of, as they related to the Jews, viz. these words, in the preface to the ten commands, " I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."....These words were written on the tables of stone

with the rest, and these words are spoken to us, as well as to the Jews: They are spoken to all to whom the commandments themselves are spoken; for they are spoken as an enforcement of the commandments. But they do not now remain in all the signification which they had, as they respected the Jews. For we never were brought out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, except in a mystical sense. The same may be said of those words which are inserted in the commandments themselves, Deut. v. 15. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day."

So that all the arguments of those who are against the Christian Sabbath, drawn from the fourth command, which are all their strength, come to nothing.

2. That the ancient church was commanded to keep a seventh day in commemoration of the work of creation, is an argument for the keeping of a weekly Sabbath in commemoration of the work of redemption, and not any reason against it.

We read in scripture of two creations, the old and the new: And these words of the fourth command are to be taken as of the same force to those who belong to the new creation, with respect to the new creation, as they were to those who belonged to the old creation, with respect to the old creation. We read, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and the church of old were to commemorate that work. But when God creates a new heaven and a new earth, those that belong to this new heaven and new earth, by a like reason, are to commemorate the creation of their heaven and earth.

The scriptures teach us to look upon the old creation as destroyed, and as it were annihilated by sin; or, as being reduced to a chaos again, without form and void, as it was at first. Jer. iv. 22, 23. "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and lo,

it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light:" i. e. They were reduced to the same state in which they were at first; the earth was without form and void, and there was no light, but darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The scriptures further teach us to call the gospel restoration and redemption, a creation of a new heaven and a new earth. Isai. lxv. 17, 18, "For behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: For behold, I create *Jerusalem* a rejoicing, and *her people* a joy." And Isai. li. 16. "And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, *Thou* art my people." And chap. lxvi. 22. "For as the new heavens, and the new earth which I will make," &c....In these places, we are not only told of a new creation, or new heavens and a new earth, but we are told what is meant by it, viz. The gospel renovation, the making of Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; saying unto Zion, "Thou art my people," &c. The prophet, in all these places, is prophesying of the gospel redemption.

The gospel state is every where spoken of as a renewed state of things, *wherein old things are passed away*, and *all things become new:* We are said to be *created in Christ Jesus unto good works: All things are restored and reconciled whether in heaven or in earth*, and God hath *caused light to shine out of darkness*, as he did at the beginning; and the dissolution of the Jewish state was often spoken of in the Old Tesament as the end of the world. But we who belong to the gospel church belong to the new creation; and therefore there seems to be at least as much reason, that we should commemorate the work of this creation, as that the members of the ancient Jewish church should commemorate the work of the old creation.

8. There is another thing which confirms it, that the fourth command reaches God's resting from the new creation, as well as from the old; which is, that the scriptures do expressly speak of the one, as parallel with the other, i. e. Christ's resting from the work of redemption, is expressly spoken of as being parallel with God's resting from the work of creation, as in Heb. iv 10. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

Now, Christ rested from his works when he rose from the dead, on the first day of the week. When he rose from the dead, then he finished his work of redemption; his humiliation was then at an end; he then rested, and was refreshed. When it is said in this place, "There remaineth a rest to the people of God;" in the original, it is, a *Sabbatism*, or *the keeping of a Sabbath:* And this reason is given for it, "For he that entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." These three things at least we are taught by these words:

(1.) We are taught by them to look upon Christ's rest from his work of redemption, as parallel with God's rest from the work of creation; for they are expressly compared together, as parallel one with the other.

(2.) They are spoken of as parallel, particularly in this respect, viz. The relation which they both have to the keeping of a Sabbath among God's people, or with respect to the influence which these two rests have, as to *Sabbatizing* in the church of God: For it is expressly with respect to this that they are compared together. Here is an evident reference to God's blessing and hallowing the day of his rest from the creation to be a Sabbath, and appointing a Sabbath of rest in imitation of him. For the apostle is speaking of this, verse 4. "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." Thus far is evident; whatever the apostle has respect to by this keeping of a Sabbath by the people of God, wheth-

er it be a weekly Sabbatizing on earth, or a Sabbatizing in heaven.

(3.) It is evident in these words, that the preference is given to the latter rest, viz. The rest of our Saviour from his works, with respect to the influence it should have, or relation it bears to the Sabbatizing of the people of God, now under the gospel, evidently implied in the expression, "There remaineth therefore a Sabbatism to the people of God. For he that entered into his rest," &c. For, in this expression, *There remaineth*, it is intimated, that the old Sabbatism appointed in remembrance of God's rest from the work of creation, doth not remain, but ceases; and that this new rest, in commemoration of Christ's resting from his works, remains in the room of it.

4. The Holy Ghost hath implicitly told us, that the Sabbath which was instituted in commemoration of the old creation, should not be kept in gospel times, in Isai. lxv. 17, 18. There we are told, that when God should create new heavens and a new earth, the former should not be remembered, nor come into mind. If this be so, it is not to be supposed, that we are to keep a seventh part of time, on purpose to remember it, and call it to mind.

Let us understand this which way we will, it will not be well consistent with the keeping of one day in seven, in the gospel church, principally for the remembrance and calling to mind of the old creation. If the meaning of the place be only this, that the old creation shall not be remembered, nor come into mind in comparison with the new, and that the new will be so much more remarkable and glorious, and will so much more nearly concern us, that so much more notice will be taken of it, and it will be thought so much more worthy to be remembered and commemorated, that the other will be forgotten, will not be remembered, nor come into mind: If we understand it thus, it is impossible that it should be more to our purpose. For then, hereby the Holy Ghost teaches us, that the Christian church has much more reason to com-

memorate the new creation than the old ; insomuch, that the old is worthy to be forgotten in comparison with it.

And as the old creation was no more to be remembered, nor come into mind ; so, in the following verse, the church is directed for ever to commemorate the new creation : "But be you glad, and rejoice forever in that which I create ; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy ; i. e. Though you forgot the old, yet for ever to the end of the world, keep a remembrance of the new creation.

5. It is an argument, that the Jewish Sabbath was not to be perpetual, that the Jews were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt. One reason why it was instituted was, because God thus delivered them, as we are expressly told in the decalogue itself, in one of the places where we have it recorded in the books of Moses..., Deut. v. 15. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm : Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." Now, can any person think, that God would have all nations under the gospel, and to the end of the world, keep a day every week, which was instituted in remembrance of the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt ?

6. The Holy Ghost hath implicitly told us, that instituted memorials of the Jews' deliverance from Egypt should be no longer upheld in gospel times, as in Jer. xvi. 14, 15. The Holy Ghost, speaking there of gospel times, says, "Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt ; but the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them ; and I will bring them again into their own land." *They shall no more say, The Lord liveth that brought*, &c. i. e. at least they shall keep up no more any public memorials of it.

If there be a Sabbath kept up in gospel times, as we have shown there must be, it is more just from these words to sup-

pose, that it should be a memorial of that which is spoken of in the latter verse, *the bringing up of the children of Israel from the land of the north*; that is, the redemption of Christ, and his bringing home the elect, not only from Judea, but from the north, and from all quarters of the world. See Isai. xliii. 16....20.

7. It is no more than just to suppose, that God intended to intimate to us, that the Sabbath ought by Christians to be kept in commemoration of Christ's redemption, in that the Israelites were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt; because that deliverance out of Egypt is an evident, known, and allowed type of it. It was contrived and ordered of God, on purpose to represent it; every thing about that deliverance was typical of this redemption, and much is made of it, principally for this reason, because it is so remarkable a type of Christ's redemption. And it was but a shadow, the work in itself was nothing in comparison with the work of redemption. What is a petty redemption of one nation from a temporal bondage, to the eternal salvation of the whole church of the elect, in all ages and nations, from eternal damnation, and the introduction of them, not into a temporal Canaan, but into heaven, into eternal glory and blessedness? Was that shadow so much to be commemorated, as that a day once a week was to be kept on the account of it; and shall not we much more commemorate that great and glorious work of which it was designed on purpose to be a shadow?

Besides, the words in the fourth commandment, which speak of the deliverance out of Egypt, can be of no significancy unto us, unless they are to be interpreted of the gospel redemption: But the words of the decalogue are spoken to all nations and ages. Therefore, as the words were spoken to the Jews, they referred to the type or shadow; as they are spoken to us, they are to be interpreted of the antitype and substance. For the Egypt from which we under the gospel are redeemed, is the spiritual Egypt; the house of bondage, from which we are redeemed, is a state of spiritual bondage.

Therefore the words, as spoken to us, are to be thus interpreted, Remember, thou wast a servant to sin and Satan, and the Lord thy God delivered thee from this bondage, with a mighty hand and out stretched arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.

As the words in the preface to the ten commandments, about the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, are interpreted in our catechism, and as they have respect to us, must be interpreted of our spiritual redemption, so, by an exact identity of reason, must these words in Deuteronomy, annexed to the fourth command, be interpreted of the same gospel redemption.

The Jewish Sabbath was kept on the day that the children of Israel came up out of the Red Sea. For we are told in Deut. v. 15. That this holy rest of the Sabbath was appointed in commemoration of their coming up out of Egypt. But the day of their going through the Red Sea was the day of their coming up out of Egypt; for till then they were in the land of Egypt. The Red Sea was the boundary of the land of Egypt....The scripture itself tells us, that that day on which they sung the song of Moses, was the day of their coming up out of the land of Egypt. Hos. ii. 15. "And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt;" referring plainly to that triumphant song which Moses and the children of Israel sang when they came up out of the Red Sea.

The scripture tells us, that God appointed the Jewish Sabbath in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from their task masters, the Egyptians, and of their rest from their hard bondage and slavery under them. Deut. v. 14, 15. "That thy man servant and thy maid servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by an out stretched arm: Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." But the day that the children of Israel were delivered from their task masters and had rest from

them, was the day when the children of Israel came up out of the Red Sea. They had no rest from them till then. For though they were before come forth on their journey to go out of the land of Egypt; yet they were pursued by the Egyptians, and were exceedingly perplexed and distressed. But on the morning that they came up out of the Red Sea, they had complete and final deliverance; then they had full rest from their task masters. Then God said to them, "The Egyptians which ye have seen this day, ye shall see no more for ever;" Exod. xiv. 13. Then they enjoyed a joyful day of rest, a day of refreshment. Then they sang the song of Moses; and on that day was their Sabbath of rest.

But this coming up of the children of Israel out of the Red Sea, was only a type of the resurrection of Christ. That people was the mystical body of Christ, and Moses was a great type of Christ himself; and besides, on that day Christ went before the children of Israel in the pillar of cloud and of fire, as their Saviour and Redeemer. On that morning Christ, in this pillar of cloud and fire, rose out of the Red Sea, as out of great waters; which was a type of Christ's rising from a state of death, and from that great humiliation which he suffered in death.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is in scripture represented by his coming up out of deep waters. So it is in Christ's resurrection, as represented by Jonah's coming out of the sea, Matth. xii. 40. It is also compared to a deliverance out of deep waters in Psal. lxix. 1, 2, 3, and ver. 14, 15. These things are spoken of Christ, as is evident from this, that many things in this Psalm are in the New Testament expressly applied to Christ, as you may see by comparing ver. 4, with John xv. 25, and ver. 9, with John ii. 17, and ver. 2, with Matth. xxvii. 34, 48, and Mark xv. 23, and John xix. 29, and ver. 22, with Rom. xi. 9, 10, and ver. 25, with Acts i 20.

Therefore it being so, that the Jewish Sabbath was appointed on the day on which the pillar of cloud and fire rose out of the Red Sea, and on which Moses and the church, the mystical body of Christ, came up out of the same sea, which

is a type of the resurrection of Christ; it is a great confirmation that the Christian Sabbath should be kept on the day of the rising of the real body of Christ from the grave, which is the antitype. For surely the Scriptures have taught us, that the type should give way to the antitype, and that the shadow should give way to the substance.

8. I argue the same thing from Psalm cxviii. 22, 23, 24. There we are taught, that the day of Christ's resurrection is to be celebrated with holy joy by the church. "The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." The stone spoken of is Christ; he was refused and rejected by the builders, especially when he was put to death. That making of him the head of the corner spoken of, which is the Lord's doing, and so marvellous in our eyes, is Christ's exaltation, which began with his resurrection. While Christ lay in the grave, he lay as a stone cast away by the builders. But when God raised him from the dead, then he became the head of the corner. Thus it is evident the apostle interprets it, Acts iv. 10, 11. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead," &c....."This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

And the day on which this was done, we are here taught, that God hath made to be the day of the rejoicing of the church.

9. The abolition of the Jewish Sabbath seems to be intimated by this, that Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, lay buried on that day. Christ, the author of the world, was the author of that work of creation, of which the Jewish Sabbath was the memorial. It was he that worked six days and rested the seventh day from all his works, and was refreshed. Yet he was holden in the chains of death on that day.....God, who created the world, now in his second work of creation, did not follow his own example, if I may so speak; he did not rest on the

same day, but remained imprisoned in the grave on that day, and took another day to rest in.

The Sabbath was a day of rejoicing; for it was kept in commemoration of God's glorious and gracious works of creation, and the redemption out of Egypt. Therefore we are directed to call the Sabbath a delight. But it is not a proper day for the church, Christ's spouse, to rejoice, when Christ the bridegroom lies buried in the grave, as Christ says, Matth. ix. 15. "That the children of the bridechamber cannot mourn, while the bridegroom is with them. But the time will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them; then shall they mourn."....While Christ was holden under the chains of death; then the bridegroom was taken from them; then it was a proper time for the spouse to mourn and not rejoice. But when Christ rose again, then it was a day of joy, because we are begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

10. Christ hath evidently, on purpose and design, peculiarly honored the first day of the week, the day on which he rose from the dead, by taking this day of the week, from time to time, to appear to the apostles, and by taking this day to pour out the Holy Ghost on the apostles, which we read of in the second chapter of Acts: For this was on the first day of the week, being on Pentecost, which was on the first day of the week, as you may see by Levit. xxiii. 15, 16. And by pouring out his spirit on the Apostle John, and giving him his visions on this day; Rev. i. 10. "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day," &c.

Now doubtless Christ had his meaning in thus distinguishingly honoring this day.

11. It is evident by the New Testament, that this was especially the day of the public worship of the primitive church, by the direction of the apostles. We are told that this was the day that they were wont to come together to break bread; and this they evidently did with the approbation of the apostles, in as much as they preached to them on that day; and therefore, doubtless, they assembled together by the direction

of the apostles. Acts xx. 7. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them."....So the Holy Ghost was careful that the public contributions should be on this day, in all the churches, rather than on any other day, as appears by our text.

12. This first day of the week is, in the New Testament, called THE LORD'S DAY; see Rev. i. 10.....Some say, how do we know that that was the first day of the week? Every day is the Lord's day. But it is ridiculous so to talk: For the design of John is to tell us when he had those visions. And if by the Lord's day is meant any day, how doth that inform us when that event took place?

But what is meant by this expression we know, just in the same way as we know what is the meaning of any word in the original of the New Testament, or the meaning of any expression in an ancient language, viz. by what we find to be the universal signification of the expression in ancient times. This expression of THE LORD'S DAY is found, by the ancient use of the whole Christian church, by what appears in all the writings of ancient times, even from the apostles' days, to signify the first day of the week.

And the expression implies in it the holiness of the day. For doubtless the day is called the LORD'S DAY, as the sacred supper is called the LORD'S SUPPER, which is so called, because it is an holy supper, to be celebrated in remembrance of the Lord Christ, and of his redemption. So this is an holy day, to be kept in remembrance of the Lord Christ, and his redemption.

The first day of the week, being in Scripture called the Lord's day, sufficiently makes it out to be the day of the week that is to be kept holy unto God; for God hath been pleased to call it by his own name. When God puts his name upon any thing, or any thing is called by the name of God in Scripture, this denotes the business of that thing and the appropriation of it to God.....Thus God put his name upon his people Israel of old; Numb. vi. 27. "And they shall put my name

upon the children of Israel." They were called by the name of God, as it is said, 2 Chron. vii. 14. "If my people which are *called by my name*," &c. i. e. They were called God's people, or the Lord's people. This denoted that they were an holy, peculiar people above all others. Deut. vii. 6. "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord;" and so in verse 14, and many other places.

So the city Jerusalem was a city that was called by God's name; Jer. xxv. 29....."Upon the city which is called by my name." Daniel ix. 18, 19. "And the city which is called by thy name," &c. This denoted that that was an holy city, a city chosen of God above all other cities for holy uses, as it is often called the HOLY CITY, as in Nehem. xi. 1. "To dwell in Jerusalem the holy city;" and in many other places.

So the Temple is said to be an house called by God's name; 1. Kings viii. 43. "This house that is called by my name." And often elsewhere. That is, it was called God's house, or the Lord's house. This denoted that it was called an holy place, an house devoted to holy uses, above all others.

So also we find that the first day of the week is called by God's name, being called in Scripture God's day, or the LORD'S day, which denotes that it is an holy day, a day appropriated to holy uses, above all others in the week.

13. The tradition of the church from age to age, though it be no rule, yet may be a great confirmation of the truth in such a case as this is. We find by all accounts, that it hath been the universal custom of the Christian church, in all ages, even from the age of the apostles, to keep the first day of the week. We read in the writings which remain of the first, second, and third centuries of the Christians' keeping the Lord's day; and so in all succeeding ages; and there are no accounts that contradict them. This day hath all along been kept by Christians, in all countries throughout the world, and by almost all that have borne the name of Christians, of all denominations, however different in their opinions as to other things.

Now, although this be not sufficient of itself, without a foundation in scripture ; yet it may be a confirmation of it, because there is really matter of conviction in it to our reason. Reason may greatly confirm truths revealed in the Scriptures. The universality of the custom throughout all Christian countries, in all ages, by what account we have of them, is a good argument, that the church had it from the apostles ; and it is difficult to conceive how all should come to agree to set up such a custom through the world, of different sects and opinions, and we have no account of any such thing.

14. It is no way weakening to these arguments, that there is nothing more plainly said about it in the New Testament, till John wrote his REVELATION, because there is a sufficient reason to be given for it. In all probability it was purposely avoided by the Holy Spirit, in the first settling of Christian churches in the world, both among the Heathen and among the Jews, but especially for the sake of the Jews, and out of tenderness to the Jewish Christians. For it is evident that Christ and the apostles declared one thing after another to them gradually as they could bear it.

The Jews had a regard for their Sabbath above almost any thing in the law of Moses ; and there was that in the Old Testament which tended to uphold them in the observance of this, much more strongly than any thing else that was Jewish. God had made so much of it, had so solemnly, frequently, and carefully commanded it, and had often so dreadfully punished the breach of it, that there was more color for their retaining this custom than almost any other.

Therefore Christ dealt very tenderly with them in this point. Other things of this nature we find very gradually revealed. Christ had many things to say, as we are informed, which yet he said not, because they could not as yet bear them, and gave this reason for it, that it was like putting new wine into old bottles. They were so contrary to their old customs, that Christ was gradual in revealing them. He gave here a little and there a little, as they could bear ; and it was a long time before he told them plainly the principal doctrines of the

kingdom of heaven. He took the most favorable opportunities to tell them of his sufferings and death, especially when they were full of admiration at some signal miracle, and were confirmed in it, that he was the Messiah.

He told them many things much more plainly after his resurrection than before. But even then, he did not tell them all, but left more to be revealed by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. They therefore were much more enlightened after that than before. However, as yet he did not reveal all. The abolition of the ceremonial law about meats and drinks was not fully known till after this.

The apostles were in the same manner careful and tender of those to whom they preached and wrote. It was very gradually that they ventured to teach them the cessation of the ceremonial laws of circumcision and abstinence from unclean meats. How tender is the Apostle Paul with such as scrupled, in the fourteenth chapter of Romans? He directs those who had knowledge to keep it to themselves, for the sake of their weak brethren. Rom. xiv. 22. But I need say no more to evince this.

However, I will say this, that it is very possible that the apostles themselves at first might not have this change of the day of the Sabbath fully revealed to them. The Holy Ghost, at his descent, revealed much to them, yet after that, they were ignorant of much of gospel doctrine; yea, they were so a great while after they acted the part of apostles, in preaching, baptising, and governing the church. Peter was surprised when he was commanded to eat meats legally unclean; so were the apostles in general, when Peter was commanded to go to the Gentiles, to preach to them.

Thus tender was Christ of the church while an infant. He did not feed them with strong meat, but was careful to bring in the observation of the Lord's day by degrees, and therefore took all occasions to honor it, by appearing from time to time of choice on that day, by sending down his Spirit on that day in that remarkable manner at Pentecost; by ordering Christians to meet in order to break bread on that day, and by order-

ing their contributions and other duties of worship to be holden on it; thus introducing the observation of it by degrees. And though as yet the Holy Ghost did not speak very plainly about it, yet God took special care that there should be sufficient evidences of his will, to be found out by the Christian church, when it should be more established and settled, and should have come to the strength of a man.

Thus I leave it with every one to judge, whether there be not sufficient evidence, that it is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be kept by the Christian church as a Sabbath?

APPLICATION.

This shall be in an use of EXHORTATION.

1. Let us be thankful for the institution of the Christian Sabbath. It is a thing wherein God hath shown his mercy to us, and his care for our souls. He shows, that he, by his infinite wisdom, is contriving for our good, as Christ teaches us, that the Sabbath was made for man; Mark ii. 27. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." It was made for the profit and for the comfort of our souls.

The Sabbath is a day of rest: God hath appointed that we should, every seventh day, rest from all our worldly labors. Instead of that, he might have appointed the hardest labors for us to go through, some severe hardships for us to endure. It is a day of outward, but especially of Spiritual rest. It is a day appointed of God, that his people thereon may find rest unto their souls; that the souls of believers may rest and be refreshed in their Saviour. It is a day of rejoicing; God made it to be a joyful day to the church; Psalm cxviii. 24. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." They that aright receive and improve the Sabbath, call it A DELIGHT and HONORABLE; it is a pleasant and a joyful day to them; it is an image of the future heaven.

ly rest of the church. Heb. iv. 9, 10, 11. "There remaineth therefore a rest (or sabbatism, as it is in the original) to the people of God. For he that hath entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest."

The Christian Sabbath is one of the most precious enjoyments of the visible church. Christ showed his love to his church in instituting it; and it becomes the Christian church to be thankful to her Lord for it. The very name of this day, THE LORD'S DAY, or JESUS' DAY, should endear it to Christians, as it intimates the special relation it has to Christ, and also the design of it, which is the commemoration of our dear Saviour, and his love to his church in redeeming it.

2. Be exhorted to keep this day holy. God hath given such evidences that this is his mind, that he will surely require it of you, if you do not strictly and conscientiously observe it. And if you do thus observe it, you may have this comfort in the reflection upon your conduct, that you have not been superstitious in it, but have done as God hath revealed it to be his mind and will in his word, that you should do; and that in so doing you are in the way of God's acceptance and reward.

Here let me lay before you the following MOTIVES to excite you to this duty.

(1.) By a strict observation of the Sabbath, the name of God is honored, and that in such a way as is very acceptable to him. Isa. lviii. 13. "If thou call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and SHALT HONOR HIM." God is honored by it, as it is a visible manifestation of respect to God's holy law, and a reverencing of that which has a peculiar relation to God himself, and that more in some respects than the observation of many other commands. A man may be just, and may be generous, and yet not so plainly show respect to the revealed mind and will of God, as many of the Heathen have been so. But if a person, with evident strictness and care, observe the Sabbath, it is a visible manifestation of a

conscientious regard to God's declaration of his mind, and so is a visible honor done to his authority.

By a strict observation of the Sabbath, the face of religion is kept up in the world. If it were not for the Sabbath, there would be but little public and visible appearance of serving, worshipping, and reverencing the supreme and invisible Being. The Sabbath seems to have been appointed very much for this end, viz. to uphold the visibility of religion in public, or among professing societies of men; and by how much greater the strictness is with which the Sabbath is observed, and with how much more solemnity the duties of it are observed among a people; by so much the greater is the manifestation among them of respect to the divine Being.

This should be a powerful motive with us to the observation of the Sabbath. It should be our study above all things to honor and glorify God. It should be the great thing with all that bear the name of Christians, to honor their great God and King, and I hope is a great thing with many that hear me at this time. If this be your inquiry, if this be your desire, to honor God; by this subject you are directed to one way whereby you may do much in that way, viz. by honoring the Sabbath, and by showing a careful and strict observance of it.

(2.) That which is the business of the Sabbath is the greatest business of our lives, viz. the business of religion. To serve and worship God is that for which we were made, and for which we had our being given us. Other business, which is of a secular nature, and on which we are wont to attend on week days, is but subordinate, and ought to be subservient to the higher purposes and ends of religion. Therefore surely we should not think much of devoting one seventh part of our time, to be wholly spent in this business, and to be set apart to exercise ourselves in the immediate duties of religion.

(3.) Let it be considered that all our time is God's, and therefore when he challenges of us one day in seven, he challenges his own; he doth not exceed his right; he would not have exceeded it, if he had challenged a far greater propor-

tion of our time to be spent in his immediate service. But he hath mercifully considered our state, and our necessities here; and, as he hath consulted the good of our souls in appointing a seventh day for the immediate duties of religion, so he hath considered our outward necessities, and hath allowed us six days for attendance on our outward affairs. What unworthy treatment, therefore, will it be of God, if we refuse to allow him even the seventh day!

(4.) As the Sabbath is a day which is especially set apart for religious exercises, so it is a day wherein God especially confers his grace and blessing. As God hath commanded us to set it apart to have converse with God, so God hath set it apart for himself to have converse with us. As God hath commanded us to observe the Sabbath, so God observes the Sabbath too. It is with respect to the Sabbath, as Solomon prayed that it might be with respect to the temple, 2 Chron. vi. 20. His eyes are open upon it: He stands ready then especially to hear prayers, to accept of religious services, to meet his people, to manifest himself to them on this day, to give his Holy Spirit and blessing to those who diligently and conscientiously sanctify it.

That we should sanctify the Sabbath, as we have observed, is according to God's institution. God in a sense observes his own institutions; i. e. is wont to cause them to be attended with a blessing. The institutions of God are his appointed means of grace, and with his institutions he hath promised his blessing. Exod. xx. 24. "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." For the same reason may we conclude, that God will meet his people and bless them, waiting upon him not only in appointed places, but at appointed times, and in all appointed ways. Christ hath promised, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them, Matth. xviii. 20. One thing included in the expression, *in his name*, is, that it is by his appointment, and according to his institution.

God hath made it our duty, by his institution, to set apart this day for a special seeking of his grace and blessing. From which we may argue, that he will be especially ready to confer his grace on those who thus seek it. If it be the day on which God requires us especially to seek him, we may argue, that it is a day on which especially he will be found. That God is ready on this day especially to bestow his blessing on them that keep it aright, is implied in that expression of *God's blessing the Sabbath day*. God hath not only hallowed the Sabbath day, but blessed it; he hath given his blessing to it, and will confer his blessing upon all the due observers of it. He hath hallowed it, or appointed that it be kept holy by us, and hath blessed it; he hath determined to give his blessing upon it.

So that here is great encouragement for us to keep holy the Sabbath, as we would seek God's grace and our own spiritual good. The Sabbath day is an accepted time, a day of salvation, a time wherein God especially loves to be sought, and loves to be found. The Lord Jesus Christ takes delight in his own day; he delights to honor it; he delights to meet with and manifest himself to his disciples on it, as he showed before his ascension, by appearing to them from time to time on this day. On this day he delights to give his Holy Spirit, as he intimated, by choosing it as the day on which to pour out the Spirit in so remarkable a manner on the primitive church, and on which to give his Spirit to the Apostle John.

Of old God blessed the seventh day, or appointed it to be a day whereon especially he would bestow blessings on his people, as an expression of his own joyful remembrance of that day, and of the rest and refreshment which he had on it. Exod. xxxi. 16, 17. "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath....For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." As princes give gifts on their birth days, on their marriage days, and the like; so God was wont to dispense spiritual gifts on the seventh day.

But how much more reason has Christ to bless the day of his resurrection, and to delight to honor it, and to confer his grace and blessed gifts on his people on this day. It was a day whereon Christ rested and was refreshed in a literal sense. It was a day of great refreshment and joy to Christ, being the day of his deliverance from the chains of death, the day of his finishing that great and difficult work of redemption, which had been upon his heart from all eternity; the day of his justification by the Father; the day of the beginning of his exaltation, and of the fulfilment of the promises of the Father; the day when he had eternal life, which he had purchased, put into his hands....On this day Christ doth indeed delight to distribute gifts, and blessings, and joy, and happiness, and will delight to do the same to the end of the world.

O therefore, how well is it worth our while to improve this day, to call upon God and seek Jesus Christ on it! Let awakened sinners be stirred up by these things, to improve the Sabbath day, as they would lay themselves most in the way of the Spirit of God. Improve the Sabbath day to call upon God; for then he is near. Improve the Sabbath day for reading the holy scriptures, and diligently attending his word preached; for then is the likeliest time to have the Spirit accompanying it. Let the saints who are desirous of growing in grace, and enjoying communion with Christ, improve the Sabbath in order to it.

(5.) The last motive which I shall mention, is the experience of the influence which a strict observation of the Sabbath has upon the whole of religion. It may be observed, that in those places where the Sabbath is well kept, religion in general will be most flourishing; and that in those places where the Sabbath is not much taken notice of, and much is not made of it, there is no great matter of religion any way.

Here I would give several directions in answer to this.

INQUIRY. How ought we to keep the Sabbath?

Answer 1. We ought to be exceedingly careful on this day to abstain from sin. Indeed, all breaches of the Sabbath are sinful; but we speak now of those things which are in themselves sinful, or sinful upon other accounts, besides that they are done upon the Sabbath. The Sabbath being holy time, it is especially defiled by the commission of sin. Sin by being committed on this day becomes the more exceeding sinful. We are required to abstain from sin at all times, but especially on holy time. The commission of immoralities on the Sabbath is the worst way of profaning it, that which most provokes God, and brings most guilt upon the souls of men.

How provoking must it be to God, when men do those things on that day which God has sanctified, and set apart to be spent in the immediate exercises of religion, which are not fit to be done on common days, which are impure and wicked whenever they are done!

Therefore, if any persons be guilty of any such wickedness as intemperance, or any unclean actions, they do in a very horrid manner profane the Sabbath. Or if they be guilty of wickedness in speech, of talking profanely, or in an unclean and lascivious manner, or of talking against their neighbors, they do in a dreadful manner profane the Sabbath. Yet very commonly those who are used to such things on week days, have not a conscience to restrain them on the Sabbath. It is well if those that live in the indulgence of the lust of uncleanness on week days be not some way or other unclean on the Sabbath. They will be indulging the same lusts then; they will be indulging the same impure flames in their imaginations at least: And it is well if they keep clear while in the house of God, and while they pretend to be worshipping God. The unclean young man gives this account of himself, Prov. v. 14. "I was almost in an evil in the midst of the congregation and the assembly." So those who are addicted to an impure way of talking in the week time, have nothing to keep them from the same upon the Sabbath, when they

meet together. But dreadfully is God provoked by such things.

We ought carefully to watch over our own hearts, and to avoid all sinful thoughts on the Sabbath. We ought to maintain such a reverence for the Sabbath, as to have a peculiar dread of sin, such as shall awe us to a very careful watch over ourselves.

2. We ought to be careful to abstain from all worldly concerns. The reason as we have showed, why it is needful and proper, that certain stated parts of time should be set apart to be devoted to religious exercises, is because the state of mankind is such in this world, that they are necessitated to exercise their minds, and employ their thoughts about secular matters. It is therefore convenient that there should be stated times, wherein all should be obliged to throw by all other concerns, that their minds may the more freely and with less entanglement, be engaged in religious and spiritual exercises.

We are therefore to do thus, or else we frustrate the very design of the institution of a Sabbath. We are strictly to abstain from being outwardly engaged in any worldly thing, either worldly business or recreations. We are to rest in remembrance of God's rest from the work of creation, and of Christ's rest from the work of redemption. We should be careful that we do not encroach upon the Sabbath at its beginning, by busying ourselves about the world after the Sabbath is begun. We should avoid talking about worldly matters, and even thinking about them; for whether we outwardly concern ourselves with the world or not, yet if our minds be upon it, we frustrate the end of the Sabbath. The end of its separation from other days is, that our minds may be disengaged from worldly things; and we are to avoid being outwardly concerned with the world, only for this reason, that that cannot be without taking up our minds. We ought therefore to give the world no place in our thoughts on the Sabbath, but to abstract ourselves from all worldly concern-

ment, and maintain a watch over ourselves, that the world do not encroach, as it is very apt to do, Isai. lviii. 13, 14.

3. We ought to spend the time in religious exercises. This is the more ultimate end of the Sabbath: We are to keep our minds separate from the world, principally for this end, that we may be the more free for religious exercises. Though it be a day of rest, yet it was not designed to be a day of idleness: To rest from worldly employments, without employing ourselves about any thing, is but to lay ourselves so much more in the devil's way. The mind will be employed some way or other; and therefore doubtless the end for which we are to call off our minds from worldly things on the Sabbath is, that we may employ them about things that are better.

We are to attend on spiritual exercises with the greatest diligence. That it is a day of rest, doth not hinder us in so doing; for we are to look on spiritual exercises but as the rest and refreshment of the soul. In heaven, where the people of God have the most perfect rest, they are not idle, but are employed in spiritual and heavenly exercises. We should take care therefore to employ our minds on a Sabbath day on spiritual objects by holy meditation; improving for our help therein the holy scriptures, and other books that are according to the word of God. We should also employ ourselves outwardly on this day in the duties of divine worship, in public and private. It is proper to be more frequent and abundant in secret duties on this day, than on other days, as we have time and opportunity, as well as to attend on public ordinances.

It is proper on this day, not only especially to promote the exercise of religion in ourselves, but also in others; to be assisting them, and endeavoring to promote their spiritual good, by religious conversation and conference. Especially those who have the care of others ought, on this day, to endeavor to promote their spiritual good: Heads of families should be instructing and counselling their children, and quickening them in the ways of religion, and should see to it

that the Sabbath be strictly kept in their houses. A peculiar blessing may be expected upon those families where there is due care taken that the Sabbath be strictly and devoutly observed.

4. We are on this day especially to meditate upon and celebrate the work of redemption. We are with special joy to remember the resurrection of Christ; because that was the finishing of the work of redemption: And this is the day whereon Christ rested and was refreshed, after he had endured those extreme labors which he had endured for our perishing souls. This was the day of the gladness of Christ's heart; it was the day of his deliverance from the chains of death, and also of our deliverance: For we are delivered in him who is our head. He, as it were, rose with his elect. He is the first fruits; those that are Christ's will follow.... Christ, when he rose, was justified as a public person, and we are justified in him. This is the day of our deliverance out of Egypt.

We should therefore meditate on this with joy; we should have a sympathy with Christ in his joy. He was refreshed on this day, we should be refreshed as those whose hearts are united with his. When Christ rejoices, it becomes all his church every where to rejoice. We are to say of this day, "This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

But we are not only to commemorate the resurrection of Christ, but the whole work of redemption, of which this was the finishing. We keep the day on which the work was finished, because it is in remembrance of the whole work. We should on this day contemplate the wonderful love of God and of Christ, as expressed in the work of redemption; and our remembrance of these things should be accompanied with suitable exercises of soul with respect to them. When we call to mind the love of Christ, it should be with a return of love on our part. When we commemorate this work, it should be with faith in the Saviour. And we should praise God and the Lamb for this work, for the divine glory and love

manifested it, in our private and public prayers, in talking of the wonderful works of God, and in singing divine songs.

Hence it is proper that Christ's disciples should choose this day to come together to break bread, or to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, Acts xx. 7, because it is an ordinance instituted in remembrance of the work of redemption.

5. Works of mercy and charity are very proper and acceptable to Christ on this day. They were proper on the ancient Sabbath. Christ was wont to do such works on the Sabbath day. But they especially become the Christian Sabbath, because it is a day kept in commemoration of the greatest work of mercy and love towards us that ever was wrought. What can be more proper than that on such a day we should be expressing our love and mercy towards our fellow creatures, and especially our fellow Christians. Christ loves to see us show our thankfulness to him in such ways as these. Therefore we find that the Holy Ghost was especially careful, that such works should be performed on the first day of the week in the primitive church, as we learn by our text.

SERMON XXVII.*

A Divine and Supernatural Light, immediately imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God, shown to be both a Scriptural and Rational Doctrine.

MATTHEW xvi. 17.

AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, BLESSED ART THOU, SIMON BARJONA: FOR FLESH AND BLOOD HATH NOT REVEALED IT UNTO THEE, BUT MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.

CHRIST says these words to Peter upon occasion of his professing his faith in him as the Son of God. Our Lord was inquiring of his disciples, who men said he was; not that he needed to be informed, but only to introduce and give occasion to what follows. They answer, that some said he was John the Baptist, and some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets. When they had thus given an account

* Preached at *Northampton*, and published at the desire of some of the hearers, in the year 1734.

who others said he was, Christ asks them, who they said he was? Simon Peter, whom we find always zealous and forward, was the first to answer: He readily replied to the question, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Upon this occasion, Christ says as he does TO him, and OF him in the text: In which we may observe,

1. That Peter is pronounced blessed on this account, BLESSED ART THOU...." Thou art an happy man, that thou art not ignorant of this, that I am CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. Thou art distinguishingly happy. Others are blinded, and have dark and deluded apprehensions, as you have now given an account, some thinking that I am Elias, and some that I am Jeremias, and some one thing, and some another; but none of them thinking right, all of them misled. Happy art thou, that art so distinguished as to know the truth in this matter."

2. The evidence of this his happiness declared; viz. That God, and he ONLY, had REVEALED IT to him. This is an evidence of his being BLESSED.

FIRST. As it shows how peculiarly favored he was of God above others; q. d. "How highly favored art thou, that others that are wise and great men, the Scribes, Pharisees, and Rulers, and the nation in general, are left in darkness, to follow their own misguided apprehensions; and that thou shouldst be singled out, as it were, by name, that my Heavenly Father should thus set his love, on THEE, SIMON BARJONA. This argues thee blessed, that thou shouldst thus be the object of God's distinguishing love."

SECONDLY. It evidences his blessedness also, as it intimates that this knowledge is above any that FLESH and BLOOD can REVEAL. "This is such knowledge, as my FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN only can give: It is too high and excellent to be communicated by such means as other knowledge

is. Thou art BLESSED, that thou knowest that which God alone can teach thee."

The original of this knowledge is here declared, both negatively and positively. POSITIVELY, as God is here declared the author of it. NEGATIVELY, as it is declared, that flesh and blood had not revealed it. God is the author of all knowledge and understanding whatsoever. He is the author of the knowledge that is obtained by human learning: He is the author of all moral prudence, and of the knowledge and skill that men have in their secular business. Thus it is said of all in Israel that were wise hearted, and skilled in embroidering, that God had filled them with the Spirit of wisdom. Exod. xxviii. 3.

God is the author of such knowledge; but yet not so but that FLESH and BLOOD reveals it. Mortal men are capable of imparting the knowledge of human arts and sciences, and skill in temporal affairs. God is the author of such knowledge by those means: FLESH and BLOOD is made use of by God as the mediate or second cause of it; he conveys it by the power and influence of natural means. But this spiritual knowledge, spoken of in the text, is what God is the author of, and none else: He reveals it, and FLESH and BLOOD reveals it not. He imparts this knowledge immediately, not making use of any intermediate natural causes, as he does in other knowledge.

What had passed in the preceding discourse naturally occasioned Christ to observe this; because the disciples had been telling how others did not know him, but were generally mistaken about him, and divided and confounded in their opinions of him: But Peter had declared his assured faith, that he was the Son of God. Now it was natural to observe, how it was not FLESH and BLOOD that had revealed it to him, but God; for if this knowledge were dependent on natural causes or means, how came it to pass that they, a company of poor fishermen, illiterate men, and persons of low education, attained to the knowledge of the truth; while the Scribes and Pharisees, men of vastly higher advantages, and greater

knowledge and sagacity in other matters, remained in ignorance? This could be owing only to the gracious distinguishing influence and revelation of the Spirit of God. Hence, what I would make the subject of my present discourse from these words, is this

DOCTRINE.

That there is such a thing as a Spiritual and Divine Light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means.

In what I say on this subject, at this time, I would,

I. Show what this divine light is.

II. How it is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means.

III. Show the truth of the doctrine.

And then conclude with a brief improvement.

I. I would show what this spiritual and divine light is. And in order to it, would shew,

First, In a few things what it is not. And here,

1. Those convictions that natural men may have of their sin and misery, is not this spiritual and divine light. Men in a natural condition may have convictions of the guilt that lies upon them, and of the anger of God, and their danger of divine vengeance. Such convictions are from light or sensibleness of truth. That some sinners have a greater conviction of their guilt and misery than others, is because some have more light, or more of an apprehension of truth than others. And this light and conviction may be from the Spir-

it of God; the Spirit convinces men of sin: But yet nature is much more concerned in it than in the communication of that spiritual and divine light that is spoken of in the doctrine; it is from the Spirit of God only as assisting natural principles, and not as infusing any new principles. Common grace differs from special, in that it influences only by assisting of nature; and not by imparting grace, or bestowing any thing above nature. The light that is obtained is wholly natural, or of no superior kind to what mere nature attains to, though more of that kind be obtained than would be obtained if men were left wholly to themselves: Or, in other words, common grace only assists the faculties of the soul to do that more fully which they do by nature, as natural conscience or reason will, by mere nature make a man sensible of guilt, and will accuse and condemn him when he has done amiss. Conscience is a principle natural to men; and the work that it doth naturally, or of itself, is to give an apprehension of right and wrong, and to suggest to the mind the relation that there is between right and wrong, and a retribution. The Spirit of God, in those convictions which unregenerate men sometimes have, assists conscience to do this work in a further degree than it would do if they were left to themselves: He helps it against those things that tend to stupify it, and obstruct its exercise. But in the renewing and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, those things are wrought in the soul that are above nature, and of which there is nothing of the like kind in the soul by nature; and they are caused to exist in the soul habitually, and according to such a stated constitution or law that lays such a foundation for exercises in a continued course, as is called a principle of nature. Not only are remaining principles assisted to do their work more freely and fully, but those principles are restored that were utterly destroyed by the fall; and the mind thenceforward habitually exerts those acts that the dominion of sin had made it as wholly destitute of, as a dead body is of vital acts.

The Spirit of God acts in a very different manner in the one case, from what he doth in the other. He may indeed act

upon the mind of a natural man, but he acts in the mind of a saint as an indwelling vital principle. He acts upon the mind of an unregenerate person as an extrinsic, occasional agent; for in acting upon them, he doth not unite himself to them; for notwithstanding all his influences that they may be the subjects of, they are still sensual, having not the Spirit. Jude 19. But he unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new supernatural principle of life and action. There is this difference, that the Spirit of God, in acting in the soul of a godly man, exerts and communicates himself there in his own proper nature. Holiness is the proper nature of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit operates in the minds of the godly, by uniting himself to them, and living in them, and exerting his own nature in the exercise of their faculties. The Spirit of God may act upon a creature, and yet not in acting communicate himself. The Spirit of God may act upon inanimate creatures; as, the *Spirit moved upon the face of the waters*, in the beginning of the creation; so the Spirit of God may act upon the minds of men many ways, and communicate himself no more than when he acts upon an inanimate creature. For instance, he may excite thoughts in them, may assist their natural reason and understanding, or may assist other natural principles, and this without any union with the soul, but may act, as it were, as upon an external object. But as he acts in his holy influences and spiritual operations, he acts in a way of peculiar communication of himself; so that the subject is thence denominated spiritual.

2. This spiritual and divine light does not consist in any impression made upon the imagination. It is no impression upon the mind, as though one saw any thing with the bodily eyes: It is no imagination or idea of an outward light or glory, or any beauty of form or countenance, or a visible lustre or brightness of any object. The imagination may be strongly impressed with such things; but this is not spiritual light. Indeed when the mind has a lively discovery of spiritual things, and is greatly affected by the power of divine light, it

it may, and probably very commonly doth, much affect the imagination; so that impressions of an outward beauty or brightness may accompany those spiritual discoveries. But spiritual light is not that impression upon the imagination, but an exceeding different thing from it. Natural men may have lively impressions on their imaginations; and we cannot determine but that the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light, may cause imaginations of an outward beauty, or visible glory, and of sounds and speeches, and other such things; but these are things of a vastly inferior nature to spiritual light.

3. This spiritual light is not the suggesting of any new truths or propositions not contained in the word of God. This suggesting of new truths or doctrines to the mind, independent of any antecedent revelation of those propositions, either in word or writing, is inspiration; such as the prophets and apostles had, and such as some enthusiasts pretend to. But this spiritual light that I am speaking of, is quite a different thing from inspiration: It reveals no new doctrine, it suggests no new proposition to the mind, it teaches no new thing of God, or Christ, or another world, not taught in the Bible, but only gives a due apprehension of those things that are taught in the word of God.

4. It is not every affecting view that men have of the things of religion that is this spiritual and divine light. Men by mere principles of nature are capable of being affected with things that have a special relation to religion as well as other things. A person by mere nature, for instance, may be liable to be affected with the story of Jesus Christ, and the sufferings he underwent, as well as by any other tragical story: He may be the more affected with it from the interest he conceives mankind to have in it: Yea, he may be affected with it without believing it; as well as a man may be affected with what he reads in a romance, or sees acted in a stage play. He may be affected with a lively and eloquent description of many pleasant things that attend the state of the blessed in heaven, as well as his imagination be entertained by a romantic de-

scription of the pleasantness of fairy land, or the like. And that common belief of the truth of the things of religion, that persons may have from education or otherwise, may help forward their affection. We read in Scripture of many that were greatly affected with things of a religious nature, who yet are there represented as wholly graceless, and many of them very ill men. A person therefore may have affecting views of the things of religion, and yet be very destitute of spiritual light. Flesh and blood may be the author of this: One man may give another an affecting view of divine things with but common assistance; but God alone can give a spiritual discovery of them.

But I proceed to show,

Secondly, Positively what this spiritual and divine light is.

And it may be thus described: A true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of them thence arising.

This spiritual light primarily consists in the former of these, viz. A real sense and apprehension of the divine excellency of things revealed in the word of God. A spiritual and saving conviction of the truth and reality of these things, arises from such a sight of their divine excellency and glory; so that this conviction of their truth is an effect and natural consequence of this sight of their divine glory. There is therefore in this spiritual light,

1. A true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things; an excellency that is of a vastly higher kind, and more sublime nature than in other things; a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a

sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a sense of the loveliness of God's holiness. There is not only a speculatively judging that God is gracious, but a sense how amiable God is upon that account, or a sense of the beauty of this divine attribute.

There is a twofold understanding or knowledge of good that God has made the mind of man capable of. The first, that which is merely speculative and notional; as when a person only speculatively judges that any thing is, which, by the agreement of mankind, is called good or excellent, viz. that which is most to general advantage, and between which and a reward there is a suitableness, and the like. And the other is, that which consists in the sense of the heart: As when there is a sense of the beauty, amiableness, or sweetness of a thing; so that the heart is sensible of pleasure and delight in the presence of the idea of it. In the former is exercised merely the speculative faculty, or the understanding, strictly so called, or as spoken of in distinction from the will or disposition of the soul. In the latter, the will, or inclination, or heart, is mainly concerned.

Thus there is a difference between having an opinion, that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former, that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind. So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance. There is a wide difference between mere speculative rational judging any thing to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness and beauty. The former rests only in the head, speculation only is concerned in it; but the heart is concerned in the latter. When the heart is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of a thing, it necessarily

feels pleasure in the apprehension. It is implied in a person's being heartily sensible of the loveliness of a thing, that the idea of it is sweet and pleasant to his soul; which is a far different thing from having a rational opinion that it is excellent.

2. There arises from this sense of divine excellency of things contained in the word of God, a conviction of the truth and reality of them: And that either directly or indirectly.

First, Indirectly, and that two ways.

1. As the prejudices that are in the heart, against the truth of divine things, are hereby removed; so that the mind becomes susceptive of the due force of rational arguments for their truth. The mind of man is naturally full of prejudices against the truth of divine things: It is full of enmity against the doctrines of the gospel; which is a disadvantage to those arguments that prove their truth, and causes them to lose their force upon the mind. But when a person has discovered to him the divine excellency of Christian doctrines, this destroys the enmity, removes those prejudices, and sanctifies the reason, and causes it to lie open to the force of arguments for their truth.

Hence was the different effect that Christ's miracles had to convince the disciples, from what they had to convince the Scribes and Pharisees. Not that they had a stronger reason, or had their reason more improved; but their reason was sanctified, and those blinding prejudices, that the Scribes and Pharisees were under, were removed by the sense they had of the excellency of Christ and his doctrine.

2. It not only removes the hindrances of reason, but positively helps reason. It makes even the speculative notions the more lively. It engages the attention of the mind, with the more fixedness and intenseness to that kind of objects; which causes it to have a clearer view of them, and enables it more clearly to see their mutual relations, and occasions it to take more notice of them. The ideas themselves that otherwise are dim and obscure, are by this means impressed with

the greater strength, and have a light cast upon them; so that the mind can better judge of them. As he that beholds the objects on the face of the earth, when the light of the sun is cast upon them, is under greater advantage to discern them in their true forms and mutual relations, than he that sees them in a dim star light or twilight.

The mind having a sensibleness of the excellency of divine objects, dwells upon them with delight; and the powers of the soul are more awakened and enlivened to employ themselves in the contemplation of them, and exert themselves more fully and much more to the purpose. The beauty and sweetness of the objects draws on the faculties, and draws forth their exercises: So that reason itself is under far greater advantages for its proper and free exercises, and to attain its proper end, free of darkness and delusion. But,

Secondly. A true sense of the divine excellency of the things of God's word doth more directly and immediately convince of the truth of them; and that because the excellency of these things is so superlative. There is a beauty in them that is so divine and godlike, that is greatly and evidently distinguishing of them from things merely human, or that men are the inventors and authors of; a glory that is so high and great, that when clearly seen, commands assent to their divinity and reality. When there is an actual and lively discovery of this beauty and excellency, it will not allow of any such thought as that it is an human work, or the fruit of men's invention. This evidence that they that are spiritually enlightened have of the truth of the things of religion, is a kind of intuitive and immediate evidence. They believe the doctrines of God's word to be divine, because they see divinity in them. i. e. They see a divine, and transcendant, and most evidently distinguishing glory in them; such a glory as, if clearly seen, does not leave room to doubt of their being of God, and not of men.

Such a conviction of the truth of religion as this, arising, these ways, from a sense of the divine excellency of them, is

that true spiritual conviction that there is in saving faith. And this original of it, is that by which it is most essentially distinguished from that common assent, which unregenerate men are capable of.

II. I proceed now to the second thing proposed, viz. To show how this light is immediately given by God, and not obtained by natural means. And here,

1. It is not intended that the natural faculties are not made use of in it. The natural faculties are the subject of this light: And they are the subject in such a manner, that they are not merely passive, but active in it; the acts and exercises of man's understanding are concerned and made use of in it. God, in letting in this light into the soul, deals with man according to his nature, or as a rational creature; and makes use of his human faculties. But yet this light is not the less immediately from God for that; though the faculties are made use of, it is as the subject and not as the cause; and that acting of the faculties in it, is not the cause, but is either implied in the thing itself (in the light that is imparted) or is the consequence of it. As the use that we make of our eyes in beholding various objects, when the sun arises, is not the cause of the light that discovers those objects to us.

2. It is not intended that outward means have no concern in this affair. As I have observed already, it is not in this affair, as it is in inspiration, where new truths are suggested: For here is by this light only given a due apprehension of the same truths that are revealed in the word of God; and therefore it is not given without the word. The gospel is made use of in this affair: This light is the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. 2 Cor. iv. 4. The gospel is as a glass, by which this light is conveyed to us. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Now we see through a glass.....But,

3. When it is said that this light is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means, hereby is intended, that it is given by God without making use of any means that operate by their own power, or a natural force. God makes

use of means; but it is not as mediate causes to produce this effect. There are not truly any second causes of it; but it is produced by God immediately. The word of God is no proper cause of this effect: It does not operate by any natural force in it. The word of God is only made use of to convey to the mind the subject matter of this saving instruction: And this indeed it doth convey to us by natural force or influence. It conveys to our minds these and those doctrines; it is the cause of the notion of them in our heads, but not of the sense of the divine excellency of them in our hearts. Indeed a person cannot have spiritual light without the word. But that does not argue, that the word properly causes that light. The mind cannot see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind; but the seeing of the excellency of the doctrine may be immediately from the Spirit of God; though the conveying of the doctrine or proposition itself may be by the word. So that the notions that are the subject matter of this light, are conveyed to the mind by the word of God; but that due sense of the heart, wherein this light formally consists, is immediately by the Spirit of God. As for instance, that notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the word of God: But the sense of the excellency of Christ by reason of that holiness and grace, is nevertheless immediately the work of the Holy Spirit.

I come now,

III. To show the truth of the doctrine; that is, to show that there is such a thing as that spiritual light that has been described, thus immediately let into the mind by God. And here I would shew briefly, that this doctrine is both *scriptural* and *rational*.

First. It is scriptural. My text is not only full to the purpose, but it is a doctrine that the scripture abounds in. We are there abundantly taught, that the saints differ from the ungodly in this, that they have the knowledge of God, and a sight of God, and of Jesus Christ. I shall mention but few

texts of many. 1 John iii. 6. "Whosoever sinneth, has not seen him, nor known him." 3 John 11. "He that doth good, is of God: But he that doth evil, hath not seen God." John xiv. 19. "The world seeth me no more; but ye see me." John xvii. 3. "And this is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" This knowledge, or sight of God and Christ, cannot be a mere speculative knowledge; because it is spoken of as a seeing and knowing, wherein they differ from the ungodly. And by these scriptures it must not only be a different knowledge in degree and circumstances, and different in its effects; but it must be entirely different in nature and kind.

And this light and knowledge is always spoken of as immediately given of God. Matth. xi. 25, 26, 27. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Here this effect is ascribed alone to the arbitrary operation, and gift of God, bestowing this knowledge on whom he will, and distinguishing those with it, that have the least natural advantage or means for knowledge, even babes, when it is denied to the wise and prudent. And the imparting of the knowledge of God is here appropriated to the Son of God, as his sole prerogative. And again, 2 Cor. iv. 6. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." This plainly shows, that there is such a thing as a discovery of the divine superlative glory and excellency of God and Christ, and that peculiar to the saints: And also, that it is as immediately from God, as light from the sun: And that it is the immediate effect of his power and will; for it is compared to God's creating the light by his powerful word in the beginning of the creation;

and is said to be by the Spirit of the Lord, in the 18th verse of the preceding chapter. God is spoken of as giving the knowledge of Christ in conversion, as of what before was hidden and unseen in that. Gal. i. 15, 16. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." The scripture also speaks plainly of such a knowledge of the word of God, as has been described, as the immediate gift of God. Psal. cxix. 18. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." What could the Psalmist mean, when he begged of God to open his eyes? Was he ever blind? Might he not have resort to the law and see every word and sentence in it when he pleased? And what could he mean by those wondrous things? Was it the wonderful stories of the creation, and deluge, and Israel's passing through the Red Sea, and the like? Were not his eyes open to read these strange things when he would? Doubtless by wondrous things in God's law, he had respect to those distinguishing and wonderful excellencies, and marvellous manifestations of the divine perfections, and glory, that there was in the commands and doctrines of the word, and those works and counsels of God that were there revealed. So the scripture speaks of a knowledge of God's dispensation, and covenant of mercy, and way of grace towards his people, as peculiar to the saints, and given only by God. Psal. xxv. 14. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."

And that a true and saving belief of the truth of religion is that which arises from such a discovery, is also what the scripture teaches. As John vi. 40. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life;" where it is plain that a true faith is what arises from a spiritual sight of Christ. And John xvii. 6, 7, 8. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou

gavest me ; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me ;" where Christ's manifesting God's name to the disciples, or giving them the knowledge of God, was that whereby they knew that Christ's doctrine was of God, and that Christ himself was of him, proceeded from him, and was sent by him. Again, John xii. 44, 45, 46. "Jesus cried and said, he that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness." There believing in Christ, and spiritually seeing him, are spoken of as running parallel.

Christ condemns the Jews, that they did not know that he was the Messiah, and that his doctrine was true, from an inward distinguishing taste and relish of what was divine, in Luke xii. 56, 57. He having there blamed the Jews, that though they could discern the face of the sky and of the earth, and signs of the weather, that yet they could not discern those times ; or as it is expressed in Matthew, the signs of those times ; he adds, yea, and why even of your ownselves, judge ye not what is right ? i. e. without extrinsic signs. Why have ye not that sense of true excellency, whereby ye may distinguish that which is holy and divine ? Why have ye not that savor of the things of God, by which you may see the distinguishing glory, and evident divinity of me and my doctrine ?

The Apostle Peter mentions it as what gave them (the apostles) good and well grounded assurance of the truth of the gospel, that they had seen the divine glory of Christ. 2 Pet. i. 16. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty." The apostle has respect to that visible glory of Christ which they saw in his transfiguration : That glory was so divine, having such an ineffable appearance and semblance of divine holiness, majesty, and grace, that it evidently denoted him to be a divine person. But if a sight of Christ's outward

glory might give a rational assurance of his divinity, why may not an apprehension of his spiritual glory do so too? Doubtless Christ's spiritual glory is in itself as distinguishing, and as plainly showing his divinity, as his outward glory, and a great deal more: For his spiritual glory is that wherein his divinity consists; and the outward glory of his transfiguration shewed him to be divine, only as it was a remarkable image or representation of that spiritual glory. Doubtless, therefore, he that has had a clear sight of the spiritual glory of Christ, may say, I have not followed cunningly devised fables, but have been an eye witness of his majesty, upon as good grounds as the apostle, when he had respect to the outward glory of Christ that he had seen.

But this brings me to what was proposed next, viz. to show that,

Secondly, This doctrine is rational.

1. It is rational to suppose, that there is really such an excellency in divine things, that is so transcendent and exceedingly different from what is in other things, that, if it were seen, would most evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt but that things that are divine, that appertain to the Supreme Being, are vastly different from things that are human; that there is that godlike, high, and glorious excellency in them, that does most remarkably difference them from the things that are of men; insomuch that if the difference were but seen, it would have a convincing, satisfying influence upon any one, that they are what they are, viz. divine. What reason can be offered against it? Unless we would argue, that God is not remarkably distinguished in glory from men.

If Christ should now appear to any one as he did on the mount at his transfiguration; or if he should appear to the world in the glory that he now appears in in heaven, as he will do at the day of judgment; without doubt, the glory and majesty that he would appear in, would be such as would satisfy every one, that he was a divine person, and that religion

was true: And it would be a most reasonable, and well grounded conviction too. And why may there not be that stamp of divinity, or divine glory on the word of God, on the scheme and doctrine of the gospel that may be in like manner distinguishing and as rationally convincing, provided it be but seen? It is rational to suppose, that when God speaks to the world, there should be something in his word or speech vastly different from man's word. Supposing that God never had spoken to the world, but we had notice that he was about to do it; that he was about to reveal himself from heaven, and speak to us immediately himself, in divine speeches or discourses, as it were from his own mouth, or that he should give us a book of his own inditing; after what manner should we expect that he would speak? Would it not be rational to suppose, that his speech would be exceeding different from man's speech, that he should speak like a God; that is, that there should be such an excellency and sublimity in his speech or word, such a stamp of wisdom, holiness, majesty and other divine perfections, that the word of man, yea of the wisest of men, should appear mean and base in comparison of it? Doubtless it would be thought rational to expect this, and unreasonable to think otherwise. When a wise man speaks in the exercise of his wisdom, there is something in every thing he says, that is very distinguishable from the talk of a little child. So, without doubt, and much more is the speech of God, (if there be any such thing as the speech of God) to be distinguished from that of the wisest of men; agreeably to Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. God having there been reproving the false prophets that prophesied in his name, and pretended that what they spake was his word, when indeed it was their own word, says, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: What is the chaff to the wheat? Saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? Saith the Lord: And like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

2. If there be such a distinguishing excellency in divine things; it is rational to suppose that there may be such a

thing as seeing it. What should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no argument, that there is no such thing as such a distinguishing excellency, or that, if there be, that it cannot be seen, that some do not see it, though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. It is not rational to suppose, if there be any such excellency in divine things, that wicked men should see it. It is not rational to suppose, that those whose minds are full of spiritual pollution, and under the power of filthy lusts, should have any relish or sense of divine beauty or excellency; or that their minds should be susceptive of that light that is in its own nature so pure and heavenly. It need not seem at all strange, that sin should so blind the mind, seeing that men's particular natural tempers and dispositions will so much blind them in secular matters; as when men's natural temper is melancholy, jealous, fearful, proud, or the like.

3. It is rational to suppose, that this knowledge should be given immediately by God, and not be obtained by natural means. Upon what account should it seem unreasonable, that there should be any immediate communication between God and the creature? It is strange that men should make any matter of difficulty of it. Why should not he that made all things, still have something immediately to do with the things that he has made? Where lies the great difficulty, if we own the being of a God, and that he created all things out of nothing, of allowing some immediate influence of God on the creation still? And if it be reasonable to suppose it with respect to any part of the creation, it is especially so with respect to reasonable, intelligent creatures; who are next to God in the gradation of the different orders of beings, and whose business is most immediately with God; who were made on purpose for those exercises that do respect God and wherein they have nextly to do with God: For reason teaches, that man was made to serve and glorify his Creator. And if it be rational to suppose that God immediately communicates himself to man in any affair, it is in this. It is rational to suppose that God would reserve that knowledge and wis-

dom, that is of such a divine and excellent nature, to be bestowed immediately by himself, and that it should not be left in the power of second causes. Spiritual wisdom and grace is the highest and most excellent gift that ever God bestows on any creature: In this the highest excellency and perfection of a rational creature consists. It is also immensely the most important of all divine gifts: It is that wherein man's happiness consists, and on which his everlasting welfare depends. How rational is it to suppose that God, however he has left meaner goods and lower gifts to second causes, and in some sort in their power, yet should reserve this most excellent, divine, and important of all divine communications, in his own hands, to be bestowed immediately by himself, as a thing too great for second causes to be concerned in? It is rational to suppose, that this blessing should be immediately from God; for there is no gift or benefit that is in itself so nearly related to the divine nature, there is nothing the creature receives that is so much of God, of his nature, so much a participation of the deity: It is a kind of emanation of God's beauty, and is related to God as the light is to the sun. It is therefore congruous and fit, that when it is given of God, it should be nextly from himself, and by himself, according to his own sovereign will.

It is rational to suppose, that it should be beyond a man's power to obtain this knowledge and light by the mere strength of natural reason; for it is not a thing that belongs to reason, to see the beauty and loveliness of spiritual things; it is not a speculative thing, but depends on the sense of the heart. Reason indeed is necessary in order to it, as it is by reason only that we are become the subjects of the means of it; which means I have already shown to be necessary in order to it, though they have no proper causal in the affair. It is by reason that we become possessed of a notion of those doctrines that are the subject matter of this divine light; and reason may many ways be indirectly and remotely an advantage to it. And reason has also to do in the acts that are immediately consequent on this discovery: A seeing the truth of religion

from hence, is by reason; though it be but by one step, and the inference be immediate. So reason has to do in that accepting of, and trusting in Christ, that is consequent on it. But if we take reason strictly, not for the faculty of mental perception in general, but for ratiocination, or a power of infering by arguments; I say, if we take reason thus, the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason, than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colors, or to the power of seeing to perceive the sweetness of food. It is out of reason's province to perceive the beauty or loveliness of any thing: Such a perception does not belong to that faculty. Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency. It is not ratiocination that gives men the perception of the beauty and amiableness of a countenance, though it may be many ways indirectly an advantage to it; yet it is no more reason that immediately perceives it, than it is reason that perceives the sweetness of honey: It depends on the sense of the heart. Reason may determine that a countenance is beautiful to others, it may determine that honey is sweet to others; but it will never give me a perception of its sweetness.

I will conclude with a very brief improvement of what has been said.

First. This doctrine may lead us to reflect on the goodness of God, that has so ordered it, that a saving evidence of the truth of the gospel is such, as is attainable by persons of mean capacities and advantages, as well as those that are of the greatest parts and learning. If the evidence of the gospel depended only on history, and such reasonings as learned men only are capable of, it would be above the reach of far the greatest part of mankind. But persons with but an ordinary degree of knowledge, are capable, without a long and subtile train of reasoning, to see the divine excellency of the things of religion: They are capable of being taught by the Spirit of God, as well as learned men. The evidence that is this way obtained, is vastly better and more satisfying, than all that

can be obtained by the arguings of those that are most learned, and greatest masters of reason. And babes are as capable of knowing these things, as the wise and prudent; and they are often hid from these when they are revealed to those. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men, after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world....."

Secondly. This doctrine may well put us upon examining ourselves, whether we have ever had this divine light, that has been described, let into our souls. If there be such a thing indeed, and it be not only a notion or whimsy of persons of weak and distempered brains, then doubtless it is a thing of great importance, whether we have thus been taught by the Spirit of God; whether the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, hath shined unto us, giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whether we have seen the Son, and believed on him, or have that faith of gospel doctrines that arises from a spiritual sight of Christ.

Thirdly. All may hence be exhorted, earnestly to seek this spiritual light. To influence and move to it, the following things may be considered.

1. This is the most excellent and divine wisdom that any creature is capable of. It is more excellent than any human learning; it is far more excellent than all the knowledge of the greatest philosophers or statesmen. Yea, the least glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Christ doth more exalt and ennoble the soul, than all the knowledge of those that have the greatest speculative understanding in divinity without grace. This knowledge has the most noble object that is or can be, viz. the divine glory and excellency of God and Christ. The knowledge of these objects is that wherein consists the most excellent knowledge of the angels, yea, of God himself.

2. This knowledge is that which is above all others sweet and joyful. Men have a great deal of pleasure in human

knowledge, in studies of natural things ; but this is nothing to that joy which arises from this divine light shining into the soul. This light gives a view of those things that are immensely the most exquisitely beautiful, and capable of delighting the eye of the understanding. This spiritual light is the dawning of the light of glory in the heart. There is nothing so powerful as this to support persons in affliction, and to give the mind peace and brightness in this stormy and dark world.

3. This light is such as effectually influences the inclination, and changes the nature of the soul. It assimilates the nature to the divine nature, and changes the soul into an image of the same glory that is beheld. 2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This knowledge will wean from the world, and raise the inclination to heavenly things. It will turn the heart to God as the fountain of good, and to choose him for the only portion. This light, and this only, will bring the soul to a saving close with Christ. It conforms the heart to the gospel, mortifies its enmity and opposition against the scheme of salvation therein revealed : It causes the heart to embrace the joyful tidings, and entirely to adhere to, and acquiesce in the revelation of Christ as our Saviour : It causes the whole soul to accord and symphonise with it, admitting it with entire credit and respect, cleaving to it with full inclination and affection ; and it effectually disposes the soul to give up itself entirely to Christ.

4. this light, and this only, has its fruit in an universal holiness of life. No merely notional or speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will ever bring to this. But this light, as it reaches the bottom of the heart, and changes the nature, so it will effectually dispose to an universal obedience. It shows God's worthiness to be obeyed and served. It draws forth the heart in a sincere love to God, which is the only principle of a true, gracious, and universal obedience ; and it convinces of the reality of those glorious rewards that God has promised to them that obey him.

SERMON XXVIII.*

The Church's Marriage to her Sons, and to her God.

ISAIAH lxii. 4, 5.

THY LAND SHALL BE MARRIED. FOR AS A YOUNG MAN MARRIETH A VIRGIN, SO SHALL THY SONS MARRY THEE: AND AS THE BRIDEGROOM REJOICETH OVER THE BRIDE, SO SHALL THY GOD REJOICE OVER THEE.

IN the midst of many blessed promises that God makes to his church in this and the preceding and following chapters, of advancement to a state of great peace, comfort, honor and joy, after long continued affliction, we have the sum of all contained in these two verses. In the 4th verse God says to his church, "Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsak-

* Preached at the instalment of the Rev. Mr. Samuel Buel, as pastor of the church and congregation at East Hampton, on Long Island, September 19, 1746.

en; neither shall thy land any more be termed, Desolate: But thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land, Beulah: For the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." When it is said, "Thy land shall be married," we are, by thy land, to understand "the body of thy people, thy whole race;" the land, by a metonymy very usual in scripture, being put for the people that inhabit the land.

The 5th verse explains how this that is promised in the last words of verse 4, should be accomplished in two things, viz. *in being married to her sons*, and *married to her God*.

1. It is promised that she should be *married to her sons*, or that her sons should marry her: For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee." Or, as the words might have been more literally translated from the original: "As a young man is married to a virgin, so shall thy sons be married to thee" Some by this understand a promise, that the posterity of the captivated Jews should return again from Babylon to the land of Canaan, and should be, as it were, married or wedded to their own land; i. e. They should be reunited to their own land, and should have great comfort and joy in it, as a young man in a virgin that he marries. But their thus interpreting the words seems to be through inadvertence; not carefully observing the words themselves, how that when it is said, "So shall thy sons marry thee," God does not direct his speech to the land itself, but to the church whose land it was; the pronoun *thee* being applied to the same mystical person in this former part of the verse, as in the words immediately following in the latter part of the same sentence, "And as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." It is the church, and not the hills and valleys of the land of Canaan, that is God's bride, or the Lamb's wife. It is also manifest, that when God says, "So shall thy sons marry thee," he continues to speak to her to whom he had spoken in the three preceding verses; but there it is not the ground or soil of the land of Canaan, but the church, that he speaks to when he says, "The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory:

And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsaken," &c. And to represent the land itself as a bride, and the subject of espousals and marriage, would be a figure of speech very unnatural, and not known in scripture; but for the church of God to be thus represented is very usual throughout the scripture from the beginning to the end of the Bible. And then it is manifest that the return of the Jews to the land of Canaan from the Babylonish captivity, is not the event mainly intended by the prophecy of which these words are a part. The time of that return was not the time when that was fulfilled in the 2d verse of this chapter, "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." That was not the time spoken of in the two preceding chapters, with which this chapter is one continued prophecy. That was not the time spoken of in the last words of the foregoing chapter, when the Lord would cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations: Nor was it the time spoken of in the 5th, 6th, and 9th verses of that chapter, when "strangers should stand and feed the flocks of God's people, and the sons of the alien should be their ploughmen, and vine dressers; but they should be named the priests of the Lord, and men should call them the ministers of God; when they should eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory boast themselves, and their seed should be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; and all that should see them should acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." Nor was that the time spoken of in the chapter preceding that, "when the abundance of the sea should be converted unto the church; when the isles should wait for God, and the ships of Tarshish to bring her sons from far, and their silver and gold with them; when the forces of the Gentiles and their kings should be brought; when the church

should suck the milk of the Gentiles, and suck the breast of kings; and when that nation and kingdom that would not serve her should perish and be utterly wasted: And when the sun should be no more her light by day, neither for brightness should the moon give light unto her, but the Lord should be unto her an everlasting light, and her God her glory; and her sun should no more go down, nor her moon withdraw itself, because the Lord should be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning should be ended" These things manifestly have respect to the Christian church in her most perfect and glorious state on earth in the last ages of the world; when the church should be so far from being confined to the land of Canaan, that she should fill the whole earth, and all lands should be alike holy.

So that the children of Israel's being wedded to the land of Canaan, being manifestly not the meaning of these words in the text, "As a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee," as some suppose; I choose rather, with others, to understand the words of the church's union with her faithful pastors, and the great benefits she should receive from them. God's ministers, though they are set to be the instructors, guides, and fathers of God's people, yet are also the sons of the church. Amos ii. 11. "I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites." Such as these, when faithful, are those precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold spoken of, Lam. iv. 2, spoken of again, verse 7. "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk." And as he that marries a young virgin becomes the guide of her youth; so these sons of Zion are represented as taking her by the hand as her guide. Isai. li. 18. "There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth: Neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up." That by these sons of the church is meant ministers of the gospel, is confirmed by the next verse to the text, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem."

That the sons of the church should be married to her as a young man to a virgin, is a mystery or paradox not unlike many others held forth in the word of God, concerning the relation between Christ and his people, and their relation to him and to one another; such as that Christ is David's Lord and yet his son, and both the root and offspring of David; that Christ is a son born and a child given, and yet the everlasting Father; that the church is Christ's mother, as she is represented, Cant. iii. 11, and viii. 1....and yet that she is his spouse, his sister, and his child; that believers are Christ's mother, and yet his sister and brother; and that ministers are the sons of the church, and yet that they are her fathers, as the apostle speaks of himself, as the father of the members of the church of Corinth, and also the mother of the Galatians, travailing in birth with them, Gal. iv. 19.

2. The second and chief fulfilment here spoken of, of that promise of the church's being married, is in her being married to Christ. "And as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Not that we are to understand that the church has many husbands, or that Christ is one husband, and ministers are other husbands that she hath: For though ministers are here spoken of as being married to the church, yet it is not as being his fellows or competitors, or as husbands of the church standing in a conjugal relation to his bride in any wise parallel with his: For the church has but one husband; she is not an adulteress, but a virgin, that is devoted wholly to the Lamb, and follows him whithersoever he goes. But ministers espouse the church entirely as Christ's ambassadors, as representing him and standing in his stead, being sent forth by him to be married to her in his name, that by this means she may be married to him. As when a prince marries a foreign lady by proxy, the prince's ambassador marries her, but not in his own name, but in the name of his master, that he may be the instrument of bringing her into a true conjugal relation to him. This is agreeable to what the apostle says, 2 Cor. xi. 2. "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you

to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Here the apostle represents himself as being, as it were, the husband of the church of Corinth; for it is the husband that is jealous when the wife commits adultery; and yet he speaks of himself as having espoused them, not in his own name, but in the name of Christ, and for him, and him only, and as his ambassador, sent forth to bring them home a chaste virgin to him. Ministers are in the text represented as married to the church in the same sense that elsewhere they are represented as fathers of the church: The church has but one father, even God, and ministers are fathers as his ambassadors; so the church has but one shepherd John x. 16. "There shall be one fold and one shepherd;" but yet ministers, as Christ's ambassadors, are often called the church's shepherds or pastors. The church has but one Saviour; but yet ministers, as his ambassadors and instruments, are called her saviours. 1 Tim. iv. 16. "In doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Obad. 21. "And saviours shall come upon Mount Zion." The church has but one Priest; but yet in Isai. lxvi. 21, speaking of the ministers of the Gentile nations, it is said, "I will take of them for priests and Levites." The church has but one Judge, for the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son; yet Christ tells his apostles, that they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

When the text speaks first of ministers marrying the church, and then of Christ's rejoicing over her as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride; the former is manifestly spoken of as being in order to the latter, even in order to the joy and happiness that the church shall have in her true bridegroom. The preaching of the gospel is in this context spoken of three times agoing, as the great means of bringing about the prosperity and joy of the church; that is foretold; once in the first verse, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth;" and then again in the text, and lastly

in the two following verses, " I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

The text thus opened affords these two propositions proper for our consideration on the solemn occasion of this day.

I. The uniting of faithful ministers with Christ's people in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man's marrying a virgin.

II. This union of ministers with the people of Christ is in order to their being brought to the blessedness of a more glorious union, in which Christ shall rejoice over them, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

I. The uniting of a faithful minister with Christ's people in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man's marrying a virgin.

I say, the uniting of a faithful minister with Christ's people, and in a due manner: For we must suppose that the promise God makes to the church in the text, relates to such ministers, and such a manner of union with the church; because this is promised to the church as a part of her latter day glory, and as a benefit that should be granted her by God, as the fruit of his great love to her, and an instance of her great spiritual prosperity and happiness in her purest and most excellent state on earth. But it would be no such instance of God's great favor and the church's happiness, to have unfaithful ministers entering into office in an undue and improper manner. They are evidently faithful ministers that are spoken of in the next verse, where the same are doubtless spoken of as in the text, " I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." And they are those that shall be introduced into the ministry at a time of its extraordinary purity, order,

and beauty, wherein (as is said in the first, second, and third verses) her righteousness should go forth as brightness, and the Gentiles should see her righteousness, and all kings her glory, and she should be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God."

When I speak of the uniting of a faithful minister with Christ's people in a due manner, I do not mean a due manner only with regard to external order; but its being truly done in a holy manner, with sincere upright aims and intentions, with a right disposition, and proper frames of mind in those that are concerned; and particularly in the minister that takes the office, and God's people to whom he is united, each exercising in this affair a proper regard to God and one another.

Such an uniting of a faithful minister with the people of God in the ministerial office, is in some respect like a young man's marrying a virgin.

1. When a duly qualified person is properly invested with the ministerial character, and does in a due manner take upon him the sacred work and office of a minister of the gospel, he does, in some sense, espouse the church of Christ in general: For though he do not properly stand in a pastoral relation to the whole church of Christ through the earth, and is far from becoming an universal pastor; yet thenceforward he has a different concern with the church of Christ in general, and its interests and welfare, than other persons have that are laymen, and should be regarded otherwise by all the members of the Christian church. Wherever he is providentially called to preach the word of God, or minister in holy things, he ought to be received as a minister of Christ, and the messenger of the Lord of Hosts to them. And every one that takes on him the office of a minister of Christ as he ought to do, espouses the church of Christ, as he espouses the interest of the church in a manner that is peculiar. He is under obligations, as a minister of the Christian church, beyond other men, to love the church, as Christ, her true bridegroom, hath loved her, and to prefer Jerusalem above his chief joy, and to

imitate Christ, the great shepherd and bishop of souls and husband of the church, in his care and tender concern for the church's welfare, and earnest and constant labors to promote it, as he has opportunity. And as he, in taking office, devotes himself to the service of Christ in his church; so he gives himself to the church, to be hers, in that love tender care, constant endeavor, and earnest labor for her provision, comfort, and welfare, that is proper to his office, as a minister of the church of Christ, by the permission of divine Providence, as long as he lives; as a young man gives himself to a virgin when he marries her. And the church of Christ in general, as constituted of true saints through the world, (though they do not deliver up themselves to any one particular minister, as universal pastor, yet) do cleave to, and embrace the ministry of the church with endeared affection and high honor, and esteem, for Christ's sake; and do joyfully commit and subject themselves to them to cleave to, honor, and help them, to be guided by them and obey them so long as in the world; as the bride doth in marriage cleave and deliver up herself to her huband. And the ministry in general, or the whole number of faithful ministers, being all united in the same work as fellow laborers, and conspiring to the same design as fellow helpers to the grace of God, may be considered as one mystical person, that espouses the church as a young man espouses a virgin: As the many elders of the church of Ephesus are represented as one mystical person, Rev. ii. 1, and all called the angel of the church of Ephesus; and as the faithful ministers of Christ in general, all over the world, seem to be represented as one mystical person, and called an angel, Rev. xiv. 6. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." But,

2. More especially is the uniting of a faithful minister with a particular Christian people, as their pastor, when done in a due manner, like a young man's marrying a virgin.

It is so with respect to the union itself, the concomitants of the union, and the fruits of it.

(1.) The union itself is, in several respects, like that which is between a young man and a virgin whom he marries.

It is so with respect to mutual regard and affection. A faithful minister, that is in a Christian manner united to a Christian people as their pastor, has his heart united to them in the most ardent and tender affection: And they, on the other hand, have their hearts united to him, esteeming him very highly in love for his works' sake, and receiving him with honor and reverence, and willingly subjecting themselves to him, and committing themselves to his care, as being, under Christ, their head and guide.

And such a pastor and people are like a young man and virgin united in marriage, with respect to the purity of their regard one to another. The young man gives himself to his bride in purity, as undebauched by meretricious embraces; and she also presents herself to him a chaste virgin. So in such an union of a minister and people as we are speaking of, the parties united are pure and holy in their affection and regard one to another. The minister's heart is united to the people, not for filthy lucre, or any worldly advantage, but with a pure benevolence to them, and desire of their spiritual welfare and prosperity, and complacence in them as the children of God and followers of Christ Jesus. And, on the other hand, they love and honor him with an holy affection and esteem; and not merely as having their admiration raised, and their carnal affections moved by having their ears tickled, and their curiosity, and other fleshly principles, gratified by a florid eloquence, and the excellency of speech and man's wisdom; but receiving him as the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, coming to them on a divine and infinitely important errand, and with those holy qualifications that resemble the virtues of the Lamb of God.

And as the bridegroom and bride give themselves to each other in covenant; so it is in that union we are speaking of

between a faithful pastor and a Christian people. The minister, by solemn vows, devotes himself to the people, to improve his time and strength, and spend and be spent for them, so long as God in his Providence shall continue the union: And they, on the other hand, in a holy covenant commit the care of their souls to him, and subject themselves to him.

(2.) The union between a faithful minister and a Christian people, that we are speaking of, is like that between a young man and virgin in their marriage, with respect to the concomitants of it.

When such a minister and such a people are thus united, it is attended with great joy. The minister joyfully devoting himself to the service of his Lord in the work of the ministry, as a work that he delights in: And also joyfully uniting himself to the society of the saints that he is set over, as having complacence in them, for his dear Lord's sake, whose people they are; and willingly and joyfully, on Christ's call, undertaking the labors and difficulties of the service of their souls. And they, on the other hand, joyfully receiving him as a precious gift of their ascending Redeemer. Thus a faithful minister and a Christian people are each other's joy, Rom. xv. 32. "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." 2 Cor. i. 14. "As you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye are ours."

Another concomitant of this union, wherein it resembles that which becomes a young man and virgin united in marriage, is mutual helpfulness, and a constant care and endeavor to promote each other's good and comfort. The minister earnestly and continually seeks the profit and comfort of the souls of his people, and to guard and defend them from every thing that might annoy them, and studies and labors to promote their spiritual peace and prosperity. They, on the other hand, make it their constant care to promote his comfort, to make the burden of his great and difficult work easy, to avoid those things that might add to the difficulty of it, and that might justly be grievous to his heart; and do what in them

lies to encourage his heart, and strengthen his hands in his work; and are ready to say to him, when called to exert himself in the more difficult parts of his work, as the people of old to Ezra the priest, when they saw him bowed down under the burden of a difficult affair, Ezra x. 4. "Arise, for this matter belongeth to thee: We also will be with thee: Be of good courage, and do it." They spare no pains nor cost to make their pastor's outward circumstances easy and comfortable, and free from pinching necessities and distracting cares, and to put him under the best advantages to follow his great work fully and successfully.

Such a pastor and people, as it is between a couple happily united in a conjugal relation, have a mutual sympathy with each other, a fellow feeling of each others' burdens and calamities, and a communion in each other's prosperity and joy. When the people suffer in their spiritual interests, the pastor suffers: He is afflicted when he sees their souls in trouble and darkness: He feels their wounds; and he looks on their prosperity and comfort as his own. 2 Cor. xi. 29. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. vii. 13. "We were comforted in your comfort." And, on the other hand, the people feel their pastor's burdens, and rejoice in his prosperity and consolations; see Phil. iv. 14, and 2 Cor ii. 3.

(3.) This union is like that which is between a young man and a virgin in its fruits.

One fruit of it is mutual benefit: They become meet helps one for another. The people receive great benefit by the minister, as he is their teacher to communicate spiritual instructions and counsels to them, and is set to watch over them to defend them from those enemies and calamities they are liable to; and so is, under Christ, to be both their guide and guard, as the husband is of the wife. And as the husband provides the wife with food and clothing; so the pastor, as Christ's steward, makes provision for his people, and brings forth out of his treasure things new and old, gives every one his portion of meat in due season, and is made the

instrument of spiritually clothing and adorning their souls. And, on the other hand, the minister receives benefit from the people, and they minister greatly to his spiritual good by that holy converse to which their union to him as his flock leads them. The conjugal relation leads the persons united therein to the most intimate acquaintance and conversation with each other; so the union there is between a faithful pastor and a Christian people, leads them to intimate conversation about things of a spiritual nature: It leads the people most freely and fully to open the case of their souls to the pastor, and leads him to deal most freely, closely, and thoroughly with them in things pertaining thereto. And this conversation not only tends to their benefit, but alo greatly to his.

And the pastor receives benefit from the people outwardly, as they take care of and order his outward accommodations for his support and comfort, and do, as it were, spread and serve his table for him.

Another fruit of this union, wherein it resembles the conjugal union, is a spiritual offspring. There is wont to arise from the union of such a pastor and people, a spiritual race of the children of the congregation that are new born. These new born children of God are in the Scripture represented both as the children of ministers, as those that have begotten them through the gospel, and also as the children of the church, who is represented as their mother that hath brought them forth, and at whose breasts they are nourished; as in Isaiah liv. 1. and lxvi. 11. Gal. iv. 26. 1 Pet. ii. 2. and many other places.

Having thus briefly shewn how the uniting of faithful ministers with Christ's people in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man's marrying a virgin,

I proceed now to the

II. Proposition, viz. That this union of ministers with the people of Christ, is in order to their being brought to the blessedness of a more glorious union, in which Christ shall rejoice over them as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

1. The saints are, and shall be the subjects of this blessedness. Of all the many various kinds of union of sensible and temporal things that are used in Scripture to represent the relation there is between Christ and his church; that which is between bridegroom and bride, or husband and wife, is much the most frequently made use of both in the Old and New Testament. The Holy Ghost seems to take a peculiar delight in this, as a similitude fit to represent the strict, intimate, and blessed union that is between Christ and his saints. The apostle intimates, that one end why God appointed marriage, and established so near a relation as that between husband and wife, was, that it might be a type of the union that is between Christ and his church; in Eph. v. 30, 31, 32. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and they two shall be one flesh." ....For this cause, i. e. because we are members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones: For this cause, God appointed that man and wife should be so joined together as to be one flesh, to represent this high and blessed union between Christ and his church: The apostle explains himself in the next words, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." This institution of marriage, and making the man and his wife one flesh, is a great mystery; i. e. it contains in it a great mystery; there is a great and glorious mystery hid in the design of it: And the apostle tells us what that glorious mystery is, "I speak concerning Christ and the church:" As much as to say, the mystery I speak of, is that blessed union that is between Christ and his church, which I spoke of before.

This union is a blessed union indeed; of which that between a faithful minister and a Christian people is but a shadow. Ministers are not the proper husbands of the church, though their union to God's people, as Christ's ambassadors, in several respects resembles the conjugal relation: But Christ is the true husband of the church, to whom the souls of the saints are espoused indeed, and to whom they are united

as his flesh and his bones, yea, and one spirit ; to whom they have given themselves in an everlasting covenant, and whom alone they cleave to, love, honor, obey, and trust in, as their spiritual husband, whom alone they reserve themselves for as chaste virgins, and whom they follow whithersoever he goeth. There are many ministers in the church of Christ, and there may be several pastors of one particular church : But the church has but one husband, all others are rejected and despised in comparison of him ; he is among the sons as the apple tree among the trees of the wood ; they all are barren and worthless, he only is the fruitful tree ; and therefore, leaving all others, the church betakes herself to him alone, and sits under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to her taste ; she takes up her full and entire rest in him, desiring no other. The relation between a minister and people shall be dissolved, and may be dissolved before death : But the union between Christ and his church shall never be dissolved, neither before death nor by death, but shall endure through all eternity : " The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but Christ's conjugal love and kindness shall not depart from his church ; neither shall the covenant of his peace, the marriage covenant, be removed," Is. liv. 1..... The union between a faithful minister and a Christian people is but a partial resemblance even of the marriage union, it is like marriage only in some particulars : But with respect to the union between Christ and his church, marriage is but a partial resemblance, yea, a faint shadow of that: Every thing that is desirable and excellent in the union between an earthly bridegroom and bride, is to be found in the union between Christ and his church ; and that in an infinitely greater perfection and more glorious manner : There is infinitely more to be found in it than ever was found between the happiest couple in a conjugal relation ; or could be found if the bride and bridegroom had not only the innocence of Adam and Eve, but the perfection of angels.

Christ and his saints, standing in such a relation as this one to another, the saints must needs be unspeakably happy :

Their mutual joy in each other is answerable to the nearness of their relation and strictness of their union: Christ rejoices over the church as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, and she rejoices in him as the bride rejoices in the bridegroom. My text has respect to the mutual joy that Christ and his church should have in each other: For though the joy of Christ over his church only is mentioned, yet it is evident that this is here spoken of and promised as the great happiness of the church, and therefore supposes her joy in him.

The mutual joy of Christ and his church is like that of bridegrooom and bride, in that they rejoice in each other, as those that they have chosen above others, for their nearest, most intimate, and everlasting friends and companions. The church is Christ's chosen, Isaiah xli. 9. "I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away:" Chap. xlviii. 10. "I have chosen thee, in the furnace of affliction." How often are God's saints called his elect or chosen ones? He has chosen them, not to be mere servants, but friends; John xv. 15. "I call you not servants;...but I have called you friends." And though Christ be the Lord of glory, infinitely above men and angels, yet he has chosen the elect to be his companions; and has taken upon him their nature; and so in some respect, as it were, levelled himself with them, that he might be their brother and companion. Christ as well as David, calls the saints his brethren and companions, Psalm cxxii. 8. "For my brethren and companions' sake I will now say, Peace be within thee." So in the book of Canticles, he calls his church his sister and spouse. Christ hath loved and chosen his church as his peculiar friend, above others; Psalm cxxxv. 4. "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure." As the bridegroom chooses the bride for his peculiar friend, above all others in the world; so Christ has chosen his church for a peculiar nearness to him, as his flesh and his bone, and the high honor and dignity of espousals above all others, rather than the fallen angels, yea, rather than the elect angels. For verily, in this respect, "he taketh not hold of angels, but he taketh hold of the seed of

Abraham ;" as the words are in the original, in Heb. ii. 16. He has chosen his church above the rest of mankind, above all the Heathen nations, and those that are without the visible church, and above all other professing Christians. Cant. vi. 9. " My dove, my undefiled is but one ; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her." Thus Christ rejoices over his church, as obtaining in her that which he has chosen above all the rest of the creation, and as sweetly resting in his choice. Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. " The Lord hath chosen Zion : He hath desired it. This is my rest for ever."

On the other hand, the church chooses Christ above all others : He is in her eyes the chief among ten thousands, fairer than the sons of men : She rejects the suit of all his rivals for his sake : Her heart relinquishes the whole world : He is her pearl of great price, for which she parts with all ; and rejoices in him, as the choice and rest of her soul.

Christ and his church, like the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in each other, as having a special propriety in each other. All things are Christ's ; but he has a special propriety in his church. There is nothing in heaven or earth, among all the creatures, that is his, in that high and excellent manner that the church is his : They are often called his portion and inheritance ; they are said, Rev. xiv. 4, " to be the first fruits to God and the Lamb." As of old, the first fruit was that part of the harvest that belonged to God, and was to be offered to him ; so the saints are the first fruits of God's creatures, being that part which is in a peculiar manner Christ's portion, above all the rest of the creation. James i. 18. " Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." And Christ rejoices in his church, as in that which is peculiarly his. Isai. lxv. 19. " I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people." The church has also a peculiar propriety in Christ : Though other things are hers, yet nothing is hers in that manner that her spiritual bridegroom is hers : As great and glorious as he is, yet he, with all his dignity and glory, is

hers; all is wholly given to her, to be fully possessed and enjoyed by her, to the utmost degree that she is capable of: Therefore we have her so often saying in the language of exaltation and triumph, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," in the book of Canticles, chap. ii. 16. and vi. 3, and vii. 10.

Christ and his church, like the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in each other, as those that are the objects of each other's most tender and ardent love. The love of Christ to his church is altogether unparalleled: The height and depth and length and breadth of it pass knowledge: For he loved the church, and gave himself for it; and his love to her proved stronger than death. And on the other hand, she loves him with a supreme affection: Nothing stands in competition with him in her heart: She loves him with all her heart: Her whole soul is offered up to him in the flame of love. And Christ rejoices and has sweet rest and delight in his love to the church. Zeph. iii. 17. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: He will save: He will rejoice over thee with joy: He will rest in his love: He will joy over thee with singing" So the church, in the exercises of her love to Christ, rejoices with unspeakable joy. 1 Pet. i. 7, 8. "Jesus Christ; whom, having not seen, ye love: In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Christ and his church rejoice in each other's beauty. The church rejoices in Christ's divine beauty and glory. She, as it were, sweetly solaces herself in the light of the glory of the sun of righteousness; and the saints say one to another, as in Isai. ii. 5. "O house of Jacob, come ye, let us walk in the light of the Lord." The perfections and virtues of Christ are as a perfumed ointment to the church, that make his very name to be to her as ointment poured forth, Cant. i. 3. "Because of the savor of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." And Christ delights and rejoices in the beauty of the church, the beauty which he hath put upon her: Her Christian graces are ornaments of great price in his sight, 1 Pet. iii. 4. And

he is spoken of as greatly desiring her beauty, Psal. xlv. 11. Yea he himself speaks of his heart as ravished with her beauty. Cant. iv. 9. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck."

Christ and his church, as the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in each other's love. Wine is spoken of, Psal. civ 15, as that which maketh glad man's heart: But the church of Christ is spoken of as rejoicing in the love of Christ, as that which is more pleasant and refreshing than wine. Cant. i. 4. "The king hath brought me into his chambers: We will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine." So on the other hand, Christ speaks of the church's love as far better to him than wine. Cant. iv. 10. "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine!"

Christ and his church rejoice in communion with each other, as in being united in their happiness, and having fellowship and a joint participation in each other's good: As the bridegroom and bride rejoice together at the wedding feast, and as thenceforward they are joint partakers of each other's comforts and joys. Rev. iii. 20. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." The church has fellowship with Christ in his own happiness, and his divine entertainments; his joy is fulfilled in her, John xv. 11, and xvii. 13. She sees light in his light; and she is made to drink at the river of his own pleasures, Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9. And Christ brings her to eat and drink at his own table, to take her fill of his own entertainments. Cant. v. 1. "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And he, on the other hand, has fellowship with her; he feasts with her; her joys are his; and he rejoices in that entertainment that she provides for him. So Christ is said to feed among the lilies, Cant. ii. 16, and chap. vii. 13, she speaks of all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which she had laid up for him; and says to him, chap. iv. 16, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his

pleasant fruits:" And he makes answer in the next verse, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honey comb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk."

And lastly, Christ and his church, as the bridegroom and bride, rejoice in conversing with each other. The words of Christ, by which he converses with his church, are most sweet to her; and therefore she says of him, Cant. v. 16, "His mouth is most sweet." And on the other hand, he says of her, chap. ii. 14, "Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice." And chap. iv. 11, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey comb: Honey and milk are under thy tongue."

Christ rejoices over his saints as the bridegroom over the bride at all times: But there are some seasons wherein he doth so more especially. Such a season is the time of the soul's conversion; when the good shepherd finds his lost sheep, then he brings it home rejoicing, and calls together his friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me. The day of a sinner's conversion is the day of Christ's espousals; and so eminently the day of his rejoicing. Sol. Song iii 11. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." And it is oftentimes remarkably the day of the saints' rejoicing in Christ: For then God turns again the captivity of his elect people, and, as it were, fills their mouth with laughter, and their tongue with singing; as in Psal. cxxvi. at the beginning. We read of the jailer, that when he was converted, "he rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house," Acts xvi. 34.

And there are other seasons of special communion of the saints with Christ, wherein Christ doth in an especial manner rejoice over his saints, and as their bridegroom brings them into his chambers that they also may be glad and rejoice in him, Cant. i. 4.

But the time wherein this mutual rejoicing of Christ and his saints will be in its perfection, is the time of the saints'

glorification with Christ in heaven; for that is the proper time of the saints entering in with the bridegroom into the marriage, Matth. xxv. 10. The saint's conversion is rather like the betrothing of the intended bride to her bridegroom before they come together; but the time of the saint's glorification is the time when that shall be fulfilled in Psal. xlv. 15. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace." That is the time when those that Christ loved, and gave himself for, that he might sanctify and cleanse them, as with the washing of water by the word, shall be presented to him in glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. The time wherein the church shall be brought to the full enjoyment of her bridegroom, having all tears wiped away from her eyes; and there shall be no more distance or absence. She shall then be brought to the entertainments of an eternal wedding feast, and to dwell eternally with her bridegroom; yea, to dwell eternally in his embraces. Then Christ will give her his loves; and she shall drink her fill, yea, she shall swim in the ocean of his love.

And as there are various seasons wherein Christ and particular saints do more especially rejoice in each other; so there are also certain seasons wherein Christ doth more especially rejoice over his church collectively taken. Such a season is a time of remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God: It is a time of the espousal of many souls to Christ; and so a time of much of the joy of espousals: And also it is a time wherein Christ is wont more especially to visit his saints with his loving kindness, and to bring them near to himself, and especially to refresh their hearts with divine communications: On which account, such a time becomes a time of great joy to the church of Christ. So when the Spirit of God was so wonderfully poured out on the city of Samaria, with the preaching of Philip, we read that there was great joy in that city, Acts viii. 8. And the time of that wonderful effusion of the Spirit at Jerusalem, begun at the feast of Pentecost, was a time of holy feasting and rejoicing, and a kind of

a wedding day to the church of Christ; wherein "they continuing daily, with one accord, in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart," as Acts ii. 46.

But more especially is the time of that great outpouring of the Spirit of God in the latter days, so often foretold in the scriptures, represented as the time of the marriage of the Lamb, and of the rejoicing of Christ and his church in each other, as the bridegroom and the bride. This is the time prophesied of in our text and context; and this is the time foretold in Isai. lxv. 19. "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying." This is the time spoken of, Rev. xix. 6, 7, 8, 9, where the apostle John tells us, He "heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." And adds, "To her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: For the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

But above all, the time of Christ's last coming, is the time of the consummation of the church's marriage with the Lamb, and the time of the complete and most perfect joy of the wedding. In that resurrection morning, when the Sun of righteousness shall appear in our heavens, shining in all his brightness and glory, he will come forth as a bridegroom; he shall come in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels. And at that glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, shall the whole elect church, complete as to every individual member, and each member with the whole man, both body and soul, and both in perfect glory, ascend up to meet the Lord in the air, to be thenceforth forever with the Lord. That will be a joyful meeting of this glorious

bridegroom and bride indeed. Then the bridegroom will appear in all his glory without any veil: And then the saints shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and at the right hand of their Redeemer; and then the church will appear as the bride, the Lamb's wife. It is the state of the church after the resurrection, that is spoken of, Rev. xxi. 2. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And verse 9. "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Then will come the time, when Christ will sweetly invite his spouse to enter in with him into the palace of his glory, which he had been preparing for her from the foundation of the world, and shall, as it were, take her by the hand, and lead her in with him: And this glorious bridegroom and bride shall, with all their shining ornaments, ascend up together into the heaven of heavens; the whole multitude of glorious angels waiting upon them: And this son and daughter of God shall, in their united glory and joy, present themselves together before the Father; when Christ shall say, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me:" And they both shall in that relation and union, together receive the Father's blessing; and shall thenceforward rejoice together, in consummate, uninterruped, immutable, and everlasting glory, in the love and embraces of each other, and joint enjoyment of the love of the Father.

2. That forementioned union of faithful ministers with the people of Christ, is in order to this blessedness.

1. It is only with reference to Christ, as the true bridegroom of his church, that there is any union between a faithful minister and a Christian people, that is like that of a bridegroom and bride.

As I observed before, a faithful minister espouses a Christian people, not in his own name, but as Christ's ambassador: He espouses them, that in their being espoused to him, they may be espoused to Christ; and not that the church may commit adultery with him: It is for his sake that he loves

her, with a tender conjugal affection, as she is the spouse of Christ, and as he, as the minister of Christ, has his heart under the influence of the Spirit of Christ; as Abraham's faithful servant, that was sent to fetch a wife for his master's son, was captivated with Rebekah's beauty and virtue; but not with reference to an union with himself, but with his master Isaac: It was for his sake he loved her, and it was for him that he desired her, and set his heart upon her, that she might be Isaac's wife: And it was for this that he greatly rejoiced over her, and for this he woo'd her, and for this he obtained her, and she was for a season united to him; but it was but as a fellow traveller, that by him she might be brought to Isaac in the land of Canaan; and for this he adorned her with ornaments of gold; it was to prepare her for Isaac's embraces. All that tender care which a faithful minister takes of his people as a kind of spiritual husband, to provide for them, to lead and feed them, and comfort them, is not as looking upon them as his own bride, but his master's.

And on the other hand, the people receive him, and unite themselves to him in covenant, and honor him and subject themselves to him, and obey him, only for Christ's sake, and as one that represents him, and acts in his name towards them. All this love, and honor, and submission, is ultimately referred to Christ. Thus the apostle says, Gal. iv. 14. "Ye received me as an angel, or messenger of God, even as Christ Jesus." And the children that are brought forth in consequence of the union of the pastor and people, are not properly the minister's children, but the children of Christ; they are not born of man, but of God.

2. The things that appertain to that forementioned union of a faithful minister and Christian people, are the principal appointed means of bringing the church to that blessedness that has been spoken of. As Abraham's servant, and the part he acted as Isaac's agent towards Rebekah, were the principal means of his being brought to enjoy the benefits of her conjugal relation to Isaac: Ministers are sent to woo the souls of men for Christ, 2 Cor. v. 20. "We are then ambassadors for

Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We read in Matth. xxii. of a certain king, that made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to invite and bring in the guests : It is ministers that are these servants. The labors of faithful ministers are the principal means God is wont to make use of for the conversion of the children of the church, and so of their espousals unto Christ. I have espoused you to one husband, says the apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 2. The preaching of the gospel by faithful ministers, is the principal means that God makes use of for the exhibiting Christ and his love and benefits to his elect people, and the chief means of their being sanctified, and so fitted to enjoy their spiritual bridegroom. Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, as by the washing of water by the word, (i. e. by the preaching of the gospel) and so might present it to himself, a glorious church. The labors of faithful ministers are ordinarily the principal means of the joy of the saints in Christ Jesus, in their fellowship with their spiritual bridegroom in this world ; 2 Cor. i. 24. " We are helpers of your joy." They are the instruments that God makes use of for the bringing up the church, as it were, from her childhood, till she is fit for her marriage with the Lord of glory ; as Mordecai brought up Hadassah, or Esther, whereby she was fitted to be queen in Ahasuerus' court. God purifies the church under their hand, as Esther, to fit her for her marriage with the king, was committed to the custody of Hagai the keeper of the women, to be purified six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors. They are made the instruments of clothing the church in her wedding garments, that fine linen, clean and white, and adorning her for her husband ; as Abraham's servant adorned Rebekah with golden earrings and bracelets. Faithful ministers are made the instruments of leading the people of God in the way to heaven, conducting them to the glorious presence of the bridegroom, to the consummate joys of her marriage with the Lamb ; as Abraham's servant conducted Rebekah from Padan aram to Canaan, and

presented her to Isaac, and delivered her into his embraces. For it is the office of ministers, not only to espouse the church to her husband, but to present her a chaste virgin to Christ.

I would now conclude this discourse with some exhortations, agreeable to what has been said. And,

1. The exhortation may be to all that are called to the work of the gospel ministry.....Let us who are honored by the glorious bridegroom of the church, to be employed as his ministers, to so high a purpose, as has been represented, be engaged and induced by what has been observed, to faithfulness in our great work; that we may be, and act towards Christ's people that are committed to our care, as those that are united to them in holy espousals, for Christ's sake, and in order to their being brought to the unspeakable blessedness of that more glorious union with the Lamb of God, in which he shall rejoice over them, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride. Let us see to it that our hearts are united to them, as a young man to a virgin that he marries, in the most ardent and tender affection; and that our regard to them be pure and uncorrupt, that it may be a regard to them, and not to what they have, or any worldly advantages we hope to gain of them. And let us behave ourselves as those that are devoted to their good; being willing to spend and be spent for them; joyfully undertaking and enduring the labor and self denial that is requisite in order to a thorough fulfilling the ministry that we have received; continually and earnestly endeavoring to promote the prosperity and salvation of the souls committed to our care; and, as those that are their bone and their flesh, looking on their calamities and their prosperity as our own; feeling their spiritual wounds and griefs, and refreshed with their consolations; and spending our whole lives in diligent care and endeavor to provide for, nourish, and instruct our people, as the intended spouse of Christ, yet in her minority, that we may form her mind and behavior, and bring her up for him, and that we may cleanse her, as with the washing of water by the word, and purify her as with sweet odors, and

clothed in such raiment as may become Christ's bride; that when the appointed wedding day comes, we may have done our work as Christ's messengers; and may then be ready to present Christ's spouse to him, a chaste virgin, properly educated and formed, and suitably adorned for her marriage with the Lamb; that he may then present her to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and may receive her into his eternal embraces, in perfect purity, beauty, and glory.

Here I would mention three or four things tending to excite us to this fidelity.

1. We ought to consider how much Christ has done to obtain that joy that has been spoken of, in order to which we have been called to the work of the ministry, viz. that wherein Christ rejoices over his church, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.

The creation of the world seems to have been especially for this end, that the eternal Son of God might obtain a spouse towards whom he might fully exercise the infinite benevolence of his nature, and to whom he might, as it were, open and pour forth all that immense fountain of condescension, love, and grace that was in his heart, and that in this way God might be glorified. Doubtless the work of creation is subordinate to the work of redemption: That is called the creation of the new heavens and new earth, and is represented as so much more excellent than the old, that that, in comparison of it, is not worthy to be mentioned, or come into mind.

But Christ has done greater things than to create the world, to obtain his bride and the joy of his espousals with her: For he was incarnate, and became man for this end; which was a greater thing than his creating the world. For the Creator to make the creature was a great thing; but for him to become a creature was a greater thing. And he did a much greater thing still to obtain this joy; in that for this he laid down his life, and suffered even the death of the cross: For this he poured out his soul unto death; and he that is the Lord of the universe, God over all blessed for evermore, of-

fered up himself a sacrifice, in both body and soul, in the flames of divine wrath. Christ obtains his elect spouse by conquest: For she was a captive in the hands of dreadful enemies; and her Redeemer came into the world to conquer these enemies, and rescue her out of their hands that she might be his bride: And he came and encountered these enemies in the greatest battle that ever was beheld by men or angels: He fought with principalities and powers; he fought alone with the powers of darkness, and all the armies of hell; yea, he conflicted with the infinitely more dreadful wrath of God, and overcame in this great battle; and thus he obtained his spouse. Let us consider at how great a price Christ purchased this spouse: He did not redeem her with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood; yea, he gave himself for her. When he offered up himself to God in those extreme labors and sufferings, this was the joy that was set before him, that made him chearfully to endure the cross, and despise the pain and shame in comparison of this joy; even that rejoicing over his church, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride that the Father had promised him, and that he expected when he should present her to himself in perfect beauty and blessedness.

The prospect of this was what supported him in the midst of the dismal prospect of his sufferings, at which his soul was troubled; as appears by the account we have, John xii. 27. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: But for this cause came I unto this hour." These words shew the conflict and distress of Christ's holy soul in the view of his approaching sufferings. But in the midst of his trouble, he was refreshed with the joyful prospect of the success of those sufferings, in bringing home his elect church to himself, signified by a voice from heaven, and promised by the Father: On which he says, in the language of triumph, verse 31, 32. "Now is the judgment of this world: Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

And ministers of the gospel are appointed to be the instruments of bringing this to pass; the instruments of bringing home his elect spouse to him, and her becoming his bride; and the instruments of her sanctifying and cleansing by the word, that she might be meet to be presented to him on the future glorious wedding day. How great a motive then is here to induce us that are called to be these instruments, to be faithful in our work, and most willingly labor and suffer, that Christ may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied? Shall Christ do such great things, and go through such great labors and sufferings to obtain this joy, and then honor us sinful worms, so as to employ us as his ministers and instruments to bring this joy to pass; and shall we be loth to labor, and backward to deny ourselves for this end?

2. Let us consider how much the manner in which Christ employs us in this great business has to engage us to a faithful performance of it. We are sent forth as his servants; but it is as highly dignified servants, as stewards of his household, as Abraham's servant; and as his ambassadors, to stand in his stead, and in his name, and represent his person in so great an affair as that of his espousals with the eternally beloved of his soul. Christ employs us not as mere servants, but as friends of the bridegroom; agreeable to the style in which John the Baptist speaks of himself, John iii. 29, in which he probably alludes to an ancient custom among the Jews at their nuptial solemnities, at which one of the guests that was most honored and next in dignity to the bridegroom, was styled *the friend of the bridegroom.*

There is not an angel in heaven, of how high an order soever, but what looks on himself honored by the Son of God and Lord of glory, in being employed by him as his minister in the high affair of his espousals with his blessed bride. But we are not only thus honored, but such an honor as this has Christ put upon us, that his spouse should in some sort be ours; that we should marry, as a young man marries a virgin, the same mystical person that he himself will rejoice over, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride; that we should be

his ministers to treat and transact for him with his dear spouse, that he might obtain this joy; and to transact in such a manner with her as in our treaty with her, to be married to her in his name, and sustain an image of his own endearing relation to her; and that she should receive us, in some sort, as himself, and her heart be united to us in esteem, honor, and affection, as those that represent him; and that Christ's and the church's children should be ours, and that the same that is the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul should be also the fruit of the travail of our souls; as the apostle speaks of himself as travailing in birth with his hearers, Gal. iv. 19. The reason why Christ puts such honor on faithful ministers, even above the angels themselves, is, because they are of his beloved church, they are select members of his dear spouse, and Christ esteems nothing too much for her, no honor too great for her. Therefore Jesus Christ, the King of angels and men, does as it were cause it to be proclaimed concerning faithful ministers, as Ahasuerus did concerning him that brought up Esther, his beloved queen; "Thus shall it be done to the man that the king delights to honor."

And seeing Christ hath so honored us, that our relation to his people imitates his; surely our affection to them should resemble his, and we should imitate him in seeking their salvation, spiritual peace, and happiness, as Christ sought it. Our tender care, labors, selfdenial, and readiness to suffer for their happiness, should imitate what hath appeared in him, that hath purchased them with his own blood.

3. Let it be considered, that if we faithfully acquit ourselves in our office, in the manner that hath been represented, we shall surely hereafter be partakers of the joy, when the bridegroom and bride shall rejoice in each other in perfect and eternal glory.

God once gave forth a particular command, with special solemnity, that it should be written for the notice of all professing Christians through all ages, that they are happy and blessed indeed, who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; Rev. xix. 9. "And he saith unto me, Write, Bless-

ed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." But if we are faithful in our work, we shall surely be the subjects of that blessedness ; we shall be partakers of the joy of the bridegroom and bride, not merely as friends and and neighbors that are invited to be occasional guests, but as members of the one and the other. We shall be partakers with the church, the blessed bride, in her joy in the bridegroom, not only as friends and ministers to the church, but as members of principal dignity ; as the eye, the ear, the hand, are principal members of the body. Faithful ministers in the church will hereafter be a part of the church that shall receive distinguished glory at the resurrection of the just, which, above all other times, may be looked on as the church's wedding day ; Dan. xii. 2, 3. " Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life ; and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." They are elders that are represented as that part of the church triumphant that sit next to the throne of God, Rev. iv. 4. " And round about the throne were four and twenty seats ; and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment ; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

And we shall also be partakers of the joy of the bridegroom in his rejoicing over his bride. We, as the special friends of the bridegroom shall stand by the bridegroom, and hear him express his joy on that day, and rejoice greatly because of the bridegroom's voice ; as John the Baptist said of himself, John iii. 29. " He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : But the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice." Christ, in reward for our faithful service, in winning and espousing his bride to him, and bringing her up from her minority, and adorning her for him, will then call us to partake with him in the joy of his marriage. And she that will then be his joy, shall also be our crown of rejoicing. 1 Thess.

ii. 19. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" What a joyful meeting had Christ and his disciples together, when the disciples returned to their Master, after the faithful and successful performance of their appointed service, when Christ sent them forth to preach the gospel; Luke x. 17. "And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." Here we see how they rejoice: The next words shew how Christ also rejoiced on that occasion: "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." And in the next verse but two, we are told that, "in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." So if we faithfully acquit ourselves, we shall another day return to him with joy; and we shall rejoice with him and he with us. Then will be the day when Christ, that has sown in tears and in blood, and we that have reaped the fruits of his labors and sufferings, shall rejoice together, agreeable to John iv. 35, 36, 37. And that will be an happy meeting indeed, when Christ and his lovely and blessed bride, and faithful ministers that have been the instruments of wooing and winning her heart to him, and adorning her for him, and presenting her to him, shall all rejoice together.

4. Further to stir us up to faithfulness in the great business that is appointed us, in order to the mutual joy of this bridegroom and bride, let us consider what reason we have to hope that the time is approaching when this joy shall be to a glorious degree fulfilled on earth, far beyond whatever yet has been; I mean the time of the church's latter day glory. This is what the words of our text have a more direct respect to; and this is what is prophesied of in Hos. ii. 19. 20. "And I will betroth thee unto me forever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." And this is

what is especially intended by the marriage of the Lamb, in Rev. xix.

We are sure this day will come: And we have many reasons to think that it is approaching; from the fulfilment of almost every thing that the prophecies speak of as preceding it, and their having been fulfilled now of a long time; and from the general earnest expectations of the church of God, and the best of her ministers and members, and the late extraordinary things that have appeared in the church of God, and appertaining to the state of religion, and the present aspects of Divine Providence, which the time will not allow me largely to insist upon.

As the happiness of that day will have a great resemblance of the glory and joy of the eternal wedding day of the church after the resurrection of the just; so will the privileges that faithful ministers shall be the subjects of at that time, much resemble the blessed privileges that they shall enjoy, as partaking with the bridegroom and bride, in their honor and happiness, in eternal glory. This is the time especially intended in the text, wherein it is said, "as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee." And it is after in the prophecies spoken of as a great part of the glory of that time, that then the church should be so well supplied with faithful ministers. So in the next verse to the text, "I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, that shall never hold their peace, day nor night." So, Isai. xxx. 20, 21. "Thy teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers; and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Jer. iii. 15. "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." And, chap. xxiii. 4. "And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them." And the great privilege and joy of faithful ministers at that day is foretold in Isai. lii. 8. "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the

voice together shall they sing: For they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

And as that day must needs be approaching, and we ourselves have lately seen some things that we have reason to hope are forerunners of it; certainly it should strongly excite us to endeavor to be such pastors as God has promised to bless his church with at that time; that if any of us should live to see the dawning of that glorious day, we might share in the blessedness of it, and then be called, as the friends of the bridegroom, to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and partake of that joy in which heaven and earth, angels and saints, and Christ and his church, shall be united at that time.

But here I would apply the exhortation in a few words to that minister of Christ, who above all others is concerned in the solemnity of this day, who is now to be united to, and set over this people as their pastor.

You have now heard, Reverend Sir, the great importance, and high ends of the office of an evangelical pastor, and the glorious privileges of such as are faithful in this office, imperfectly represented. May God grant that your union with this people, this day, as their pastor, may be such, that God's people here may have the great promise God makes to his church in the text, now fulfilled unto them. May you now, as one of the precious sons of Zion, take this part of Christ's church by the hand, in the name of your great Master, the glorious bridegroom, with an heart devoted unto him with true adoration and supreme affection, and for his sake knit to this people, in a spiritual and pure love, and as it were a conjugal tenderness; ardently desiring that great happiness for them, which you have now heard Christ has chosen his church unto, and has shed his blood to obtain for her; being yourself ready to spend and be spent for them; remembering the great errand on which Christ sends you to them, viz. to woo and win their hearts, and espouse their souls to him, and to bring up his elect spouse, and to fit and adorn her for his embraces; that you may in due time present her a chaste virgin to him, for him to rejoice over, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the

bride. How honorable is this business that Christ employs you in! And how joyfully should you perform it! When Abraham's faithful servant was sent to take a wife for his master's son, how engaged was he in the business; and how joyful was he when he succeeded! With what joy did he bow his head and worship, and bless the Lord God of his master, for his mercy and his truth in making his way prosperous! And what a joyful meeting may we conclude he had with Isaac, when he met him in the field, by the well of Lahai-roi, and there presented his beauteous Rebekah to him, and told him all things that he had done! But this was but a shadow of that joy that you shall have, if you imitate his fidelity, in the day when you shall meet your glorious Master, and present Christ's church in this place, as a chaste and beautiful virgin unto him.

We trust, dear Sir, that you will esteem it a most blessed employment, to spend your time and skill in adorning Christ's bride for her marriage with the Lamb, and that it is work that you will do with delight; and that you will take heed that the ornaments you put upon her are of the right sort, what shall be indeed beautiful and precious in the eyes of the bridegroom, that she may be all glorious within, and her clothing of wrought gold; that on the wedding day, she may stand on the King's right hand in gold of Ophir.

The joyful day is coming, when the spouse of Christ shall be led in unto the King with raiment of needle work; and angels and faithful ministers will be the servants that shall lead her in. And you, Sir, if you are faithful in the charge that is now to be committed to you, shall be joined with glorious angels in that honorable and joyful service; but with this difference, that you shall have the higher privilege. Angels and faithful ministers shall be together in bringing in Christ's bride into his palace, and presenting her to him: But faithful ministers shall have a much higher participation of the joy of that occasion: They shall have a greater and more immediate participation with the bride in her joy; for they shall not only be ministers to the church as the angels are, but parts of

the church, principal members of the bride. And as such, at the same time that angels do the part of ministering spirits to the bride, when they conduct her to the bridegroom, they shall also do the part of ministering spirits to faithful ministers. And they shall also have an higher participation with the bridegroom than the angels, in his rejoicing at that time; for they shall be nearer to him than they; for they are also his members, and are those that are honored as the principal instruments of espousing the saints to him, and fitting them for the enjoyment of him; and therefore they will be more the crown of rejoicing of faithful ministers, than of the angels of heaven.

So great, dear Sir, is the honor and joy that is set before you, to engage you to faithfulness in your pastoral care of this people; so glorious the prize that Christ has set up to engage you to run the race that is set before you.

I would now conclude with a few words to the people of this congregation, whose souls are now to be committed to the care of that minister of Christ, whom they have chosen as their pastor.

Let me take occasion, dear brethren, from what has been said, to exhort you, not forgetting the respect, honor, and reverence, that will ever be due from you to your former pastor, that has served you so long in that work, but by reason of age and growing infirmities, and the prospect of his place being so happily supplied by a successor, has seen meet to relinquish the burden of the pastoral charge over you: I say, Let me exhort you (not forgetting due respect to him as a father) to perform the duties that belong to you, in your part of that relation and union, now to be established between you and your elect pastor: To receive him as the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, one that in his office represents the glorious bridegroom of the church, to love and honor him, and willingly submit yourselves to him, as a virgin when married to an husband. Surely the feet of that messenger should be beautiful, that comes to you on such a blessed errand as that which you have heard, to espouse you to the eternal Son of God, and

to fit you for, and lead you to him as your bridegroom. Your chosen pastor comes to you on this errand, and he comes in the name of the bridegroom, so empowered by him, and representing him, that in receiving him, you will receive Christ, and in rejecting him, you will reject Christ.

Be exhorted to treat your pastor as the beautiful and virtuous Rebekah treated Abraham's servant: She most charitably and hospitably entertained him, provided lodging and food for him and his company, and took care that he should be comfortably entertained and supplied in all respects, while he continued in his embassy; and that was the note or mark of distinction which God himself gave him, by which he should know the true spouse of Isaac from all others of the daughters of the city. Therefore in this respect approve yourselves as the true spouse of Christ, by giving kind entertainment to your minister that comes to espouse you to the antitype of Isaac. Provide for his outward subsistence and comfort, with the like cheerfulness that Rebekah did for Abraham's servant. You have an account of her alacrity and liberality in supplying him, in Gen. xxiv. 18, 19, 20, and 25. Say as her brother did, verse 31. "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord."

Thus you should entertain your pastor. But this is not that wherein your duty towards him chiefly lies: The main thing is to comply with him in his great errand, and to yield to the suit that he makes to you in the name of Christ, to go to be his bride. In this you should be like Rebekah: She was, from what she heard of Isaac, and God's covenant with him, and blessing upon him, from the mouth of Abraham's servant, willing for ever to forsake her own country, and her father's house, to go into a country she had never seen, to be Isaac's wife, whom also she never saw. After she had heard what the servant had to say, and her old friends had a mind she should put off the affair for the present, but it was insisted on that she should go immediately, and she was inquired of, "whether she would go with this man," she said, "I will go:" And she left her kindred, and followed the man through all that long journey, till he had brought her unto Isaac, and they

three had that joyful meeting in Canaan. If you will this day receive your pastor in that union that is now to be established between him and you, it will be a joyful day in this place, and the joy will be like the joy of espousals, as when a young man marries a virgin; and it will not only be a joyful day in East Hampton, but it will doubtless be a joyful day in heaven, on your account. And your joy will be a faint resemblance, and a forerunner of that future joy, when Christ shall rejoice over you as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, in heavenly glory.

And if your pastor be faithful in his office, and you hearken and yield to him in that great errand on which Christ sends him to you, the time will come, wherein you and your pastor will be each other's crown of rejoicing, and wherein Christ, and he, and you, shall all meet together at the glorious marriage of the Lamb, and shall rejoice in and over one another, with perfect, uninterrupted, never ending and never fading joy.

SERMON XXIX.*

The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister.

JOHN v. 35.

HE WAS A BURNING AND A SHINING LIGHT.

THAT discourse of our blessed Saviour we have an account of in this chapter from the 17th verse to the end, was occasioned by the Jews' murmuring against him, and persecuting him for his healing the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, and bidding him take up his bed and walk on the Sabbath day. Christ largely vindicates himself in this discourse, by asserting his fellowship with God the Father in nature and operations, and thereby implicitly shewing himself to be Lord of the Sabbath, and by declaring to the Jews that God the Father, and he with him, did *work hitherto*, or even to this time; i. e. although it be said that God rested on the seventh day from all his works, yet indeed God continues to work hitherto, even to this very day, with respect to his greatest work, the work of redemption, or new creation, which he

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carries on by Jesus Christ, his Son. Pursuant to the designs of which work was his shewing mercy to fallen men by healing their diseases, and delivering them from the calamities they brought on themselves by sin. This great work of redemption, God carries on from the beginning of the world to this time; and his rest from it will not come till the resurrection, which Christ speaks of in the 21st and following verses: The finishing of this redemption as to its procurement, being in his own resurrection; and as to the application, in the general resurrection and eternal judgment, spoken of from verse 20 to verse 30. So that notwithstanding both the rest on the seventh day, and also the rest that Joshua gave the children of Israel in Canaan; yet the great rest of the Redeemer from his work, and so of his people with him and in him, yet remains, as the apostle observes, Heb. chap. iv. This will be at the resurrection and general judgment; which Christ here teaches the Jews, was to be brought to pass by the Son of God, by the Father's appointment, and so the works of God to be finished by him.

And inasmuch as this vindication was so far from satisfying the Jews, that it did but further enrage them, because hereby he made himself equal with God, Christ therefore refers them to the witness of John the Baptist; whose testimony they must acquiesce in, or else be inconsistent with themselves; because they had generally acknowledged John to be a great prophet, and seemed for a while mightily affected and taken with it, that God, after so long a withholding the spirit of prophecy, had raised up so great a prophet among them....and it is concerning him that Christ speaks in this verse wherein is the text: "He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light."

In order to a right understanding and improvement of the words of the text, we may observe,

1. What Christ here takes notice of in John, and declares concerning him, viz. That *he was a burning and a shining*

light. He was a light to the church of Israel, to reveal the mind and will of God to them, after a long continued dark season, and after they had been destitute of any prophet to instruct them, for some ages: He arose on Israel, as the morning star, the forerunner of the sun of righteousness, to introduce the day spring, or dawning of the gospel day, to give light to them that till then had sat in the darkness of perfect night, which was the shadow of death; to give them the knowledge of salvation; as Zecharias his father declares at his circumcision, Luke i. 76...79. "And thou child shalt be called the Prophet of the highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

And he was a burning light, as he was full of a spirit of fervent piety and holiness, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his Mother's womb, having his heart warmed and enflamed with a great love to Christ, being that *friend of the bridegroom, that stood and heard him, and rejoiced greatly because of the bridegroom's voice;* and was glad that Christ increased, though he decreased, John iii. 29, 30. And was animated with a holy zeal in the work of the ministry: He came in this respect, in the spirit and power of Elias; as Elias was zealous in bearing testimony against the corruption, apostacies, and idolatries of Israel in his day, so was John the Baptist in testifying against the wickedness of the Jews in his day: As Elias zealously reproved the sins of all sorts of persons in Israel, not only the sins of the common people, but of their great ones, Ahab, Ahaziah and Jezebel, and their false prophets; with what zeal did John the Baptist reprove all sorts of persons, not only the Publicans and Soldiers, but the Pharisees and Sadducees, telling them plainly that they were a generation of vipers, and rebuked the wickedness of Herod in his most beloved lust, though Herod sought his life for it,

as Ahab and Ahaziah did Elijah's. As Elias was much in warning the people of God's approaching judgments, denouncing God's awful wrath against Ahab, Jezebel and Ahaziah, and the Prophets of Baal, and the people in general: So was John the Baptist, much in warning the people to fly from the wrath to come, telling them in the most awakening manner, that the "axe was laid at the root of the tree, and that every tree that brought not forth good fruit should be hewn down and cast into the fire, and that he that came after him had his fan in his hand, and that he would thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

John the Baptist was not only a burning, but a shining light: He was so in his doctrine, having more of the gospel in his preaching than the former Prophets, or at least the gospel exhibited with greater light and clearness, more plainly pointing forth the person that was to be the great redeemer, and declaring his errand into the world, to take away the sin of the world, as a Lamb offered in sacrifice to God, and the necessity that all, even the most strictly moral and religious stood in of him, being by nature a generation of vipers; and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, consisting not in circumcision, or outward baptism, or any other external performance or privileges, but in the powerful influences of the Holy Ghost in their hearts, a being *baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*

In this clearness with which he gave knowledge of salvation to God's people, John was a bright light, *and among them that had been born of women there had not arisen a greater than he.* In this brightness this harbinger of the gospel day excelled all the other Prophets, as the morning star reflects more of the light of the sun than any other star, and is the brightest of all the stars.

He also shone bright in his conversation, and his eminent mortification and renunciation of the enjoyments of the world; his great diligence and laboriousness in his work, his impartiality in it, declaring the mind and will of God to all sorts

without distinction; his great humility, rejoicing in the increase of the honor of Christ, though his honor was diminished, as the brightness of the morning star diminishes, as the light of the sun increases; and in his faithfulness and courage, still declaring the mind and will of God, though it cost him his own life. Thus his light shone before men.

2. We may observe to what purpose Christ declares these things of John in the text, viz. to shew how great and excellent a person he was, and worthy that the Jews should regard his testimony: Great are the things which Christ elsewhere says of John the Baptist, as in Matth. xi. 7.....14 He speaks of him as a *Prophet; and more than a Prophet;* and one, *than whom, there had not risen a greater among them that had been born of women.* He observes how great and excellent a light he was in the text, to shew the Jews how inexcusable they were in not receiving the testimony he had given of him; as you may see v. 31, 32, 33.

Therefore that which I would observe from the text to be the subject of my present discourse is this:

It is the excellency of a minister of the gospel to be both a burning and a shining light.

Thus we see it is in Christ's esteem, the great prophet of God, and light of the world, head of the church, and Lord of the harvest, and the great Lord and master whose messengers all ministers of the gospel are.

John the Baptist was a minister of the gospel; and he was so more eminently than the ancient prophets; for though God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake the gospel by them; yet John the Baptist was a great minister of the gospel in a manner distinguished from them: He is reckoned in scripture the first that introduced the gospel day, after the law and the Prophets, Luke vi. 16. "The law and the Prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached." And his preaching is called the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Mark i. 1. He came on that errand, to give knowledge of salvation to God's people, through the remission of their sins; (as his

father Zecharias observes, Luke i 77,) and to preach these glad tidings that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.

John being thus eminently a minister of the gospel, and a burning and shining light being taken notice of by Christ as his great excellency, we may justly hence observe, that herein consists the proper excellency of ministers of the gospel.

I would, by divine assistance, handle the subject in the following method.

I. I would shew that Christ's design, in the appointment of the order and office of ministers of the gospel is, that they may be lights to the souls of men.

II. I would shew what is implied in their being burning lights.

III. I would shew what is implied in their being shining lights.

IV. I would shew that it is the proper excellency of ministers of the gospel to have these things united in them, to be both burning and shining lights.

V. I would apply these things to all that Christ has called to the work of the gospel ministry, shewing how much it concerns them earnestly to endeavor that they may be burning and shining lights.

VI. Show what ministers of the gospel ought to do that they may be so.

VII. Say something briefly concerning the duty of a people that are under the care of a gospel minister, correspondent to those things that Christ has taught us concerning the end and excellency of a gospel minister.

I. I would observe that Christ's design in the appointment of the order and office of ministers of the gospel was that they might be lights to the souls of men.

Satan's kingdom is a kingdom of darkness; the Devils are the rulers of the darkness of this world. But Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of light; the designs of his kingdom are carried on by light; his people *are not of the night, nor of darkness*, but are *the children of the light*, as they are the children of God, who is *the Father of lights*, and as it were a boundless fountain of infinitely pure and bright light, 1 John i. 5. James i. 17.

Man by the fall extinguished that divine light that shone in this world in its first estate. The scripture represents the wickedness of man as reducing the world to that state wherein it was when it was yet without form and void, and darkness filled it. Jer. iv. 22, 23. "For my people is foolish, they have not known me: They are sottish children; and they have none understanding: They are wise to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light." But God in infinite mercy has made glorious provision for the restoration of light to this fallen dark world; he has sent him who is the brightness of his own glory, into the world, to be the light of the world. "He is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," i. e. Every man in the world that ever has any true light. But in his wisdom and mercy, he is pleased to convey his light to men by means and instruments; and has sent forth his messengers, and appointed ministers in his church to be subordinate lights, and to shine with the communications of his light, and to reflect the beams of his glory on the souls of men.

There is an analogy between the divine constitution and disposition of things in the natural and in the spiritual world. The wise Creator has not left the natural world without light; but in this our solar system has set one great light, immensely exceeding all the rest, shining perpetually with a transcendent fulness and strength, to enlighten the whole; and he

hath appointed other lesser, subordinate or dependent lights, that shine with the communications and reflections of something of his brightness. So it is in the spiritual world; there God hath appointed Jesus Christ as a Sun of righteousness: The Church of God has not the Sun to be her light by day; nor for brightness, does the moon give light to her, but the Lord is her everlasting light, and her God her glory. The new Jerusalem has no need of the sun, nor the moon; for the Lamb is the light thereof. And the ministers of Christ are, as it were, the stars that encompass this glorious fountain of light, to receive and reflect his beams, and give light to the souls of men. As Christ therefore is in scripture called the sun, so are his ministers called stars. So are the twelve apostles, the chief ministers of the christian church, called, Rev. xii. 1. "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." And so are the ordinary ministers of the gospel called. Rev. i. 16. "And he had in his right hand seven stars." And verse 20. "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks; the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." Here also ministers of the gospel are implicitly compared to those lamps that enlightened the temple at Jerusalem, upon the tops of the golden candlesticks: And more expressly in Zech. iv. 2. "I have looked, and behold a candlestick, all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon."

These lamps have all their oil from Christ, and are inkindled by his flame, and shine by his beams; and being thus dependent on him, they are near to him, and held in his right hand, that they may receive light from him, to communicate to others.

The use of a light is threefold; to discover, to refresh, and to direct.

The first use of a light is to discover things, or make them manifest. Without light nothing is to be seen. Eph. v. 13. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." Ministers are

set to be lights to the souls of men in this respect, as they are to be the means of imparting divine truth to them, and bringing into their view the most glorious and excellent objects, and of leading them to, and assisting them in the contemplation of those things that angels desire to look into; the means of their obtaining that knowledge is infinitely more important and more excellent and useful, than that of the greatest statesmen or philosophers, even that which is spiritual and divine: They are set to be the means of bringing men out of darkness into God's marvellous light, and of bringing them to the infinite fountain of light, that in his light they may see light: They are set to instruct men, and impart to them that knowledge by which they may know God and Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

Another use of light is to refresh and delight the beholders. Darkness is dismal: The light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun. Light is refreshing to those who have long sat in darkness: They therefore that watch and keep awake through a dark night, long and wait for the light of the morning; and the wise man observes, Prov. xv. 30. "That the light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart." Spiritual light is especially refreshing and joyful. Psalm xcvii. 11. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. They that see the light of Christ, the star that hath arisen out of Jacob, are refreshed and do rejoice, as the wise men that saw the star that shewed them where Christ was, Matth. ii. 10. "And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

Ministers are set in the church of God to be the instruments of this comfort and refreshment to the souls of men, to be the instruments of leading souls to the God of all consolation, and fountain of their happiness: They are sent as Christ was, and as coworkers with him, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and to comfort all that mourn: They are to lead those that "labor, and are heavy laden" to their true rest,

and to speak a word in season to him that is weary: They are set to be ministers of the consolation and joy of the saints. 2 Cor. i. 24. "We have not dominion over your faith; but are helpers of your joy."

The third use of light is to direct. 'Tis by light that we see where to go: "He that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes," and is in danger of stumbling and falling into mischief. 'Tis by light that men see what to do, and are enabled to work; in the night, Christ tells us no man can work. Ministers are set to be lights to mens' souls in this respect also; as Zecharias observes of John the baptist, Luke i. 79. "To guide our feet in the way of peace." Ministers have the record of God committed to them that they may hold that forth, which God has given to be to man as a light shining in a dark place, to guide them in the way through this dark world, to regions of eternal light. Ministers are set to be the instruments of conveying to men that true wisdom spoken of Job 28. "Which cannot be gotten for gold, nor shall silver be weighed for the price thereof; which cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious Onyx, or the Sapphire.

I proceed now to the

II. Thing proposed, viz. to shew what is implied in a minister of the gospel's being a burning light.

There are these two things that seem naturally to be understood by this expression, viz. That his heart be filled with much of the holy ardor of a spirit of true piety; and that he be fervent and zealous in his administrations.

1. That his heart be full of much of the holy ardor of a spirit of true piety. We read of the power of godliness. True grace is no dull, inactive, ineffectual principle; it is a powerful thing; there is an exceeding energy in it; and the reason is, that God is in it; it is a divine principle, a participation of the divine nature, and a communication of divine life, of the life of a risen Saviour, who exerts himself in the hearts of the saints, after the power of an endless life. They that

have true grace in them, *they live;* but not by their own life; *but Christ lives in them:* His Holy Spirit becomes in them a living principle and spring of divine life: The energy and power of which is in scripture compared to fire. Matth. iii. 11. "I indeed baptize you with water; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." True piety is not a thing remaining only in the head, or consisting in any speculative knowledge or opinions, or outward morality, or forms of religion; it reaches the heart, is chiefly seated there, and burns there. There is a holy ardor in every thing that belongs to true grace: True faith is an ardent thing, and so is true repentance; there is a holy power and ardor in true spiritual comfort and joy; yea, even in true Christian humility, submission and meekness. The reason is, that divine love or charity is the sum of all true grace, which is a holy flame enkindled in the soul: It is by this therefore especially, that a minister of the gospel is a *burning light:* A minister that is so, has his soul enkindled with the heavenly flame; his heart burns with love to Christ, and fervent desires of the advancement of his kingdom and glory; and also with ardent love to the souls of men, and desires for their salvation.

2. The inward holy ardor of his soul is exercised and manifested in his being *zealous and fervent in his administrations:* For, he is a *burning light;* which implies that his spiritual heat and holy ardor is not for himself only, but is communicative, and for the benefit of others: He is ardent, as he is *a light*, or in the performance of the duties of that office wherein he is set to be a light in the church of Christ. His fervent zeal, which has its foundation and spring in that holy and powerful flame of love to God and man, that is in his heart, appears in the fervency of his prayers to God, for and with his people; and in the earnestness and power with which he preaches the word of God, declares to sinners their misery, and warns them to fly from the wrath to come, and reproves, and testifies against all ungodliness; and the un-

feigned earnestness and compassion with which he invites the weary and heavy laden to their Saviour; and the fervent love with which he counsels and comforts the saints; and the holy zeal, courage and stedfastness, with which he maintains the exercise of discipline in the house of God, notwithstanding all the opposition he meets with in that difficult part of the ministerial work; and in the diligence and earnestness with which he attends every duty of his ministerial function, whether public or private.

But I hasten to the

III. Thing proposed in the handling of this subject, viz. To shew what is implied in a minister's being *a shining light*.

There are three things that seem to be naturally signified by it.

1. That he be *pure, clear, and full in his doctrine*. A minister is set to be a light to men's souls, by teaching, or doctrine: And if he be a shining light in this respect, the light of his doctrine must be bright and full; it must be pure without mixtures of darkness; and therefore he must be sound in the faith, not one that is of a reprobate mind; in doctrine he must show uncorruptness; otherwise his *light* will be darkness: He must not lead his people into errors, but teach them the truth only, guiding their feet into the way of peace, and leading them in the right ways of the Lord.

He must be one that is *able to teach*, not one that is raw, ignorant, or unlearned, and but little versed in the things that he is to teach others; *not a novice*, or one that is *unskilful in the word of righteousness*; he must be one that is well studied in divinity, well acquainted with the written word of God, mighty in the scriptures, and able to instruct and convince gainsayers.

And in order to be a *shining light*, he must be one that really knows what religion is, one that is truly acquainted with that Saviour and way of salvation, that he is to teach to others, that he may *speak the things that he knows, and testify the things that he has seen*, and not be a blind leader of the blind: He

must be one that is acquainted with experimental religion, and not ignorant of the inward operations of the Spirit of God, nor of Satan's devices ; able to guide souls under their particular difficulties. Thus he must be *a scribe well instructed in things that pertain to the kingdom of God ;* one *that brings forth out of his treasures, things new and old.*

And in order to his being a *shining light*, his doctrine must be *full*, he must not only be able to teach, but apt to teach, ready to instruct the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, and diligent in teaching, in public and private ; and careful and faithful to declare the whole counsel of God, and not keep back any thing that may be profitable to his hearers.

Also his being a *shining light* implies that his instructions are clear and plain, accommodated to the capacity of his hearers, and tending to convey light to their understandings.

2. Another thing requisite in order to a minister's being a *shining light*, is that he be *discreet in all his administrations.* The fervent zeal that thus should animate and actuate him in his administrations should be regulated by discretion : He should not only be knowing, and able to communicate knowledge and formed to do it ; but also wise, and know how to conduct himself in the house of God, as a wise builder, and a wise steward. And as he is one that God hath sent forth to labor in his field, and committed the care of his vineyard to, so he should conduct himself there as one *whom his God doth instruct to discretion :* He should not only be as *harmless as a dove*, but as *wise as a serpent ;* shewing himself a *workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth ;* and one that *knows how to govern the church of God*, and to *walk in wisdom towards those that are without.*

3. Another thing implied in a minister's being a *shining light*, is that he *shines in his conversation :* If he shines never so much in his doctrine and administrations in the house of God, yet if there be not an answerable brightness in his conversation, it will have a tendency to render all ineffectual. Christ, in Matth. v. 14, 15, 16, says to his disciples (having undoubtedly a special respect to those of them that were to be

sent forth to preach the gospel) "Ye are the light of the world:....Men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." And how does Christ direct them to give light to others? "Let your light," says he, "so shine before men, that others seeing your *good works*, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." And he tells the same disciples again, John xv. 8. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." And how should they bring forth fruit? Christ tells them, verse 10, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love," and verse 14, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

God sent his Son into the world to be the light of the world these two ways, viz. By revealing his mind and will to the world, and also by setting the world a perfect example. So ministers are set to be lights, not only as teachers, but as ensamples to the flock, 1 Peter v. 3.

The same things that ministers recommend to their hearers in their doctrine, they should also shew them an example of in their practice. Thus the apostle says to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 11. "These things command and teach;" and then adds in the next verse, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." So he directs Titus, in his teaching, to recommend sobriety, gravity, temperance, patience, and other virtues, in the beginning of the 2d chapter of Titus. But then adds in the 7th verse, "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works."

We see in natural bodies, that when heat is raised in them to a high degree, at length they begin to shine: And, as I observed before, a principle of true grace in the soul is like an inward heat, an holy ardor of an heavenly fire enkindled in the soul: This in ministers of the gospel ought to be to that degree, as to shine forth brightly in all their conversation; and there should as it were be a light about them wherever they go, exhibiting to all that behold them, the amiable, de-

lightful image of the beauty and brightness of their glorious master.

I proceed to the

IV. Thing proposed, which is to shew that the excellency of a minister of the gospel consists in his being thus *both a burning and a shining light*.

This is manifest in two things:

1. Herein his ministry is acceptable and amiable in the sight of God and men.

When light and heat are thus united in a minister of the gospel, it shews that each is genuine, and of a right kind, and that both are divine. Divine light is attended with heat; and so, on the other hand, a truly divine and holy heat and ardor is ever accompanied with light.

It is the glory of the sun that such a bright and glorious light, and such a powerful, refreshing, vivifying heat, are both together diffused from that luminary. When there is light in a minister, consisting in human learning, great speculative knowledge and the wisdom of this world, without a spiritual warmth and ardor in his heart, and a holy zeal in his ministrations, his light is like the light of an *ignis fatuus*, and some kinds of putrifying carcases that shine in the dark, though they are of a stinking savor. And if on the other hand a minister has warmth and zeal, without light, his heat has nothing excellent in it, but is rather to be abhorred; being like the heat of the bottomless pit; where, though the fire be great, yet there is no light. To be hot in this manner, and not lightsome, is to be like an angel of darkness. But ministers by having light and heat united in them, will be like the angels of light; which for their light and brightness are called morning stars. Job xxviii. 7. "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." And because of that holy ardor of divine love and zeal with which they burn, they are compared to a flaming fire. Psal. civ. 4. "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flaming fire," and are therefore called seraphims, which is a word

that is derived from a root that signifies *to burn*. So that by ministers of the gospel being *burning and shining lights*, the *angels of the churches* will become like the *angels of heaven*, and those stars held in the right hand of Christ here below, will be like those morning stars above, and which is much more, hereby ministers will be like their glorious Lord and Master; who is not only the Master of ministers of the gospel, but is the head and Lord of the glorious angels, whom they adore, and who communicates to them the brightness in which they shine, and the flame with which they burn, and is the glorious luminary and sun of the heavenly world, from whence all the inhabitants of that world have their light and life, and all their glory. In this Sun of righteousness is that light, whose brightness is such that the light of the sun in the firmament in comparison of it is as darkness, yea, *black as sackcloth of hair*: For he is the infinite brightness of God's glory; and of him it is said, Isai. xxiv. 23, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, before his ancients, gloriously." And accompanying this bright light in him, is the infinitely intense flame of love. There is no love to be compared to his; nor ever was love both to God and man so manifested, as has been in what Christ has done and suffered; for *herein was love!* Ministers, by being burning and shining lights, become the sons of God, of whom we read that he *is light*, and that he *is love*. 1 John i. 5. "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that *God is light*, and in him is no darkness at all." And chap. iv. 16. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us: *God is love*, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Therefore it must needs be that ministers, by being burning and shining lights, are acceptable and amiable in the sight of God, as he delights in his own image and in the image of his Son: And hereby also they will be honorable and amiable in the sight of men, all such as have any sense of that which is truly excellent and beautiful; and it is the way to have

their ministry pleasant and delightful to those of this character that sit under it.

2. Herein a minister of the gospel will be likely to answer the ends of his ministry: By this means his ministry will not only be amiable, but profitable. If a minister has light without heat, and entertains his auditory with learned discourses, without a savor of the power of godliness, or any appearance of fervency of spirit, and zeal for God and the good of souls, he may gratify itching ears, and fill the heads of his people with empty notions; but it will not be very likely to reach their hearts, or save their souls. And if, on the other hand, he be driven on with a fierce and intemperate zeal, and vehement heat, without light, he will be likely to kindle the like unhallowed flame in his people, and to fire their corrupt passions and affections; but will make them never the better, nor lead them a step towards heaven, but drive them apace the other way.

But if he approves himself in his ministry, as both a burning and a shining light, this will be the way to promote true Christianity amongst his people, and to make them both wise good, and cause religion to flourish among them in the purity and beauty of it.

When divine light and heat attend each other in ministers of the gospel, their light will be like the beams of the sun, that do not only convey light, but give life; and converts will be likely to spring up under their ministry, as the grass and the plants of the field under the influences of the sun; and the souls of the saints will be likely to grow, and appear beautiful *as the lily*, and to *revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and their scent to be as the wine of Lebanon;* and their light will be like the light of Christ, which is the light of life, John viii. 12.

If the sun should shine upon the earth, with the same brightness that it doth now, yet if it were without any heat, it would give life to nothing; the world be a desolate wilderness, with nothing growing in it; the death of every living thing must be the consequence; and the sun's light could

be of no service to us, but to cause us to see our own and others' misery, without being able to help ourselves or them. On the other hand, if the sun diffused the same heat that now it does, but the world was destitute at the same time of any light, it would be equally unserviceable: Mankind having no light to guide them in their business, in tilling the field, or gathering the produce of the earth, we should be like the Egyptians in the three days' darkness, who saw not one another, nor rose from their place: And thus also death would be the unavoidable consequence. But by light and heat accompanying one another, the whole face of the earth becomes fruitful, and is adorned, and all things are quickened and flourish, and mankind enjoy both life and comfort.

I proceed to the

V. Thing proposed in handling the doctrine, to apply these things to all here present, that Christ has called to the work of the gospel ministry, observing how much it concerns such to endeavor to be burning and shining lights.

Our office and work is most honorable, in that we are set by Christ to be lights or luminaries in the spiritual world. Light is the most glorious thing in the material world, and there are, it may be, no parts of the natural world that have so great an image of the goodness of God, as the lights or luminaries of heaven; and especially the sun, who is constantly communicating his benign influence to enlighten, quicken and refresh the world by his beams; which is probably the reason that the worship of the sun was (as is supposed) the first idolatry that mankind fell into. But so are ministers honored by their great Lord and Master, that they are set to be that to men's souls, that the lights of heaven are to their bodies; and that they might be the instruments and vehicles of God's greatest goodness, and the most precious fruits of his eternal love to them, and means of that life, and refreshment and joy, that are spiritual and eternal, and infinitely more precious than any benefit received by the benign beams of the sun in the firmament. And we shall be likely indeed to be

the instruments of those unspeakable benefits to the souls of our fellow creatures, if we have those qualifications, which have been shewn to be the true and proper excellency of ministers of the gospel. Herein our glory will answer the honorable station Christ has set us in. And hereby our ministry will be likely to be as beneficial as our office is honorable: We shall be like Christ, and shall shine with his beams; Christ will live in us, and be seen in his life and beauty in our ministry, and in our conversation, and we shall be most likely to be the means of bringing others to him, and of their receiving of his light, and being made partakers of his life, and having his joy fulfilled in them. And this will be the way for us hereafter to be as much advanced and distinguished in our reward, as we are honored in the office and business we are called to here. In this way, those whom Christ has set to be lights in his church, and to be stars in the spiritual world here, shall be lights also in the church triumphant, and shine as stars for ever in heaven. Daniel xii. 3. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.

But if we fail of the proper excellency of ministers of the gospel, we shall not be in the sight of God the more worthy or honorable for our high office, but the more abominable and inexcusable; our wickedness being aggravated by God's great goodness and condescension to us, and the peculiar obligations that he laid upon us; and instead of being eminently beneficial and great blessings, as lights to reflect the beams of Christ's glory and love, we shall be so much the more hurtful and pernicious, for our being in such a station; and so shall be likely hereafter to suffer a so much more dreadful punishment. The devils in hell are so much the more odious to God, and more the objects of his wrath, because he set them in the dignity and glory of angels, the excellency of which state they are fallen from. And it is likely that those in hell that will be nearest to the fallen angels, in their state of misery, will be those that Christ once set to be angels of the

churches, but through their unfaithfulness, failed of their proper excellency and end.

Here I would apply myself in a few words to the person whose intended ordination, this day, to the great work of the gospel minstry, is the occasion of this discourse.

You have now, dear sir, heard something of the nature and design of that office to which you are this day, in the name of Christ, to be solemnly set apart. You are therein called to be a light to the souls of men, a lamp in God's temple, and a star in the spiritual world. And you have heard wherein, in Christ's esteem, consists the proper excellency of one in that office, and how in this a minister of the gospel becomes, like his glorious master, and glorifies him, and is likely to be the instrument of the salvation and happiness of the souls of men, and to receive a glorious reward from the hands of God.

These, sir, are the motives that you are to be influenced by, to endeavor to be a burning and a shining light in the work of the ministry. As to the things of this world, you are not to expect outward ease, pleasure and plenty : Nor are you to depend on the friendship and respect of men ; but should prepare to endure hardness, as one that is going forth as a soldier to war. But they are higher things than these, more excellent benefits than the world can afford, that Christ offers to those that approve themselves to him in this work.

God in his providence has brought you far from your native land, and from your friends and acquaintance there ; but you will have reason notwithstanding to acknowledge the good hand of his providence towards you, if he is pleased to make you a burning and shining light in this part of his church, and by the influence of your light and heat (or rather by his divine influence, with your ministry) to cause this wilderness to bud and blossom as the rose, and give it the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, and to cause you to shine in the midst of this people with warm and lightsome, quickening and comforting beams, causing their souls to flourish, rejoice and bear fruit like a garden of pleasant fruits, under the beams of the sun.

By this means you will be to their souls the vehicle of the influences and blessings of the heavenly world, which is a world of light and love, shall be ever held in Christ's right hand, and shall be terrible to the powers of darkness; and shall see more and more of the light of Christ's glory and grace in this place, with you and this people, and shall hereafter not only shine yourself, as the brightness of the firmament, but shall meet with them in glory also, who shall shine there around you, as a bright Constellation in the highest Heaven; where they shall be your everlasting Crown of rejoicing.

But I hasten to the

VI. Thing proposed, which was to shew what course ministers of the gospel ought to take, or what things they should do, that they may be burning and shining lights.

And here I shall but just mention things, without enlarging.

And in order to this, ministers should be diligent in their studies, and in the work of the ministry to which they are called; giving themselves wholly to it; taking heed to themselves, that their hearts be not engaged, and their minds swallowed up, and their time consumed, in pursuits after the profits and vain glory of the world.

And particularly, ministers should be very conversant with the holy scriptures; making it very much their business, with the utmost diligence and strictness, to search those holy writings: For they are as it were the beams of the light of the sun of righteousness; they are the light by which ministers must be enlightened, and the light they are to hold forth to their hearers; and they are the fire whence their hearts and the hearts of their hearers must be enkindled.

They should earnestly seek after much of the spiritual knowledge of Christ, and that they may live in the clear views of his glory. For by this means they will be changed into the image of the same glory and brightness, and will come to their people as Moses came down to the congregation of Israel, after he had seen God's back parts in the Mount, with his face

shining. If the light of Christ's glory shines upon them, it will be the way for them to shine with the same kind of light on their hearers, and to reflect the same beams, which have heat, as well as brightness. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, is the treasure the apostle speaks of, that ministers have, as in earthen vessels: 2. Cor. iv. 6, 7. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined into your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." This was probably typified of old, by the burning lights and lamps which GIDEON's soldiers had in one hand in earthen pitchers, while they held a trumpet in the other, with which they sounded, (typifying the preaching of the gospel.) And thus with the sound of these trumpets, and these burning lights or earthen vessels, they overcame the enemies of God and his people.

Ministers, in order to their being burning and shining lights, should walk closely with God, and keep near to Christ; that they may ever be enlightened and enkindled by him. And they should be much in seeking God, and conversing with him by prayer, who is the fountain of light and love: And knowing their own emptiness and helplessness should be ever dependent on Christ; being sensible with JEREMIAH that they are children, should sit as children at Christ's feet to hear his word, and be instructed by him; and being sensible with ISAIAH that they are men of unclean lips, should seek that their lips may be, as it were, touched with a live coal from the altar, as it were by the bright and burning seraphim.

I come now to the

VII And last thing proposed, to say something very briefly concerning the duties of a people that are under the care of a minister corresponding with these things that Christ has taught us concerning the nature and end of this sacred office. And here I would have a special respect to the people of God in this place, who are about to have the care of their souls

committed to him, that is now solemnly to be set apart to the work of the ministry.

If it be, as you have heard, the proper excellency of a minister of the gospel to be a burning and a shining light, then it is your duty earnestly to pray for your minister, that he may be filled with divine light, and with the power of the Holy Ghost, to make him so. For herein you will but pray for the greatest benefit to yourselves; for if your minister burns and shines, it will be for your light and life. That which has been spoken of, as it is the chief excellency of a minister, so it renders a minister the greatest blessing of any thing in the world that ever God bestows on a people.

And as it is your duty, to pray that your minister may by this mean become such a blessing to you, so you should do your part to make him so, by supporting him, and putting him under the best advantage, with a mind free from worldly cares, and the pressure of outward wants and difficulties, to give himself wholly to his work; and by all proper acts of respect and kindness and assistance, to encourage his heart, and strengthen his hands: And to take heed that instead of this you do not take a course to obscure and extinguish the light that would shine among you, and to smother and suppress the flame, by casting dirt upon it; by necessitating your minister by your penuriousness towards him, to be involved in worldly care; and by discouraging his heart by disrespect and unkindness. And particularly when your minister shews himself to be a burning light by burning with a proper zeal against any wickedness that may be breaking out amongst his people, and manifests it by bearing a proper testimony against it in the preaching of the word, or by a faithful exercise of the discipline of God's house, instead of taking it thankfully, and yielding to him in it, as you ought, does not raise another fire of a contrary nature against it, viz. the fire of your unhallowed passions, reflecting upon and reproaching him for his faithfulness. Herein you will act very unbecoming a Christian people, and shew yourselves very ungrateful to your minister, and to Christ who has bestowed upon you so faithful a minis-

ter, and will also, while you fight against him, and against Christ, fight most effectually against your own souls. If Christ gives you a minister that is a burning and shining light, take heed that you do not hate the light, because your deeds are reproved by it; but love and rejoice in his light; and that not only for a season, like John the Baptist's apostatizing hearers: And come to the light. Let your frequent resort be to your minister for instruction in soul cases, and under all spiritual difficulties; and be open to the light and willing to receive it; and be obedient to it. And thus walk as the children of the light, and follow your minister wherein he is a follower of Christ, i. e. wherein he is as a burning and shining light. If you continue so to do, your path will be the path of the just, which shines more and more to the perfect day, and the end of your course shall be in those blissful regions of everlasting light above, where you shall shine forth with your minister, and both with Christ, *as the sun, in the kingdom of the heavenly Father.*

SERMON XXX.*

Christ the Example of Ministers.

JOHN xiii. 15, 16.

FOR I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN EXAMPLE, THAT YE SHOULD DO AS I HAVE DONE TO YOU. VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, THE SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS LORD, NEITHER HE THAT IS SENT, GREATER THAN HE THAT SENT HIM.

WE have in the context, an account of one of the many very remarkable things that passed that night wherein Christ was betrayed (which was on many accounts the most remarkable night that ever was) viz. Christ's washing his disciple's feet; which action, as it was exceeding wonderful in itself, so it manifestly was symbolical, and represented something else far more important and more wonderful, even that greatest and most wonderful of all things that ever came to pass, which was accomplished the next day in his last suffer-

* Preached at *Portsmouth*, at the ordination of the Rev. Mr. Job Strong, June 28, 1749.

ings. There were three symbolical representations given of that great event this evening; one in the passover, which Christ now partook of with his disciples; another in the Lord's supper, which he instituted at this time; and another in this remarkable action of his washing his disciple's feet. Washing the feet of guests was the office of servants, and one of their meanest offices: And therefore was fitly chosen by our Saviour to represent that great abasement which he was to be the subject of in the form of a servant, in becoming obedient unto death, even that ignominious and accursed death of the cross, that he might cleanse the souls of his disciples from their guilt and spiritual pollution.

This spiritual washing and cleansing of believers was the end for which Christ so abased himself for them. Tit. ii. 14. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people." Eph. v. 25, 26. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water." That Christ's washing his disciple's feet signified this spiritual washing of the soul, is manifest by his own words in the 8th verse of the context. "Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Christ, in being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, not only did the part of a servant unto God, but in some respects also of a servant unto us. And this is not the only place where his so abasing himself for our sakes is compared to the doing of the part of a servant to guests. We have the like representation made in Luke xxii. 27. "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth." And wherein Christ was among the disciples as he that did serve, is explained in Matth. xx. 28, namely, in *his giving his life a ransom for them.*

When Christ had finished washing his disciples' feet, he solemnly requires their attention to what he had done, and commands them to follow his example therein. Verse 12....17.

"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet: For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent, greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

When our Saviour calls on his disciples to imitate the example he had given them in what he had done, we are to understand him, not merely by the example he gave in the emblematical action, in washing his disciples' feet, in it selfconsidered; but more especially, of that much greater act of his that was signified by it, in abasing himself so low, and suffering so much, for the spiritual cleansing and salvation of his people.

This is what is chiefly insisted on as the great example Christ has given us to follow: So it is once and again afterwards, in the discourse Christ had with his disciples, this same night, verse 34, of the chapter wherein is the text: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Chap. xv. 12, 13. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And so in 1 John iii. 16. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Christ, in the words of the text, does not only intend to recommend this example of his to the disciples as Christians, or some of his professing people, but especially as his ministers. This is evident by those words he uses to enforce this counsel, "Neither he that is sent, is greater than he that sent him." In which words he manifestly has respect to that great

errand on which he had sent them, when he bid them *go and preach the gospel to the lost sheep of the House of Israel*, Matth. x. 5, 6, and on which they were to be sent after his resurrection, when he said to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The same errand that Christ has respect to John xx. 21. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

And what confirms this is, that Christ elsewhere recommends to officers in his church, that are in that respect chief among his followers, the example which he set in his abasing himself to be as a servant that ministers to guests at a table, in his giving his life for us; Matth. xx. 27, 28. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Compare Luke xxii. 25....28.

The work and business of ministers of the gospel is as it were that of servants, to wash and cleanse the souls of men: For this is done by the preaching of the word, which is their main business, Eph. v. 26. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

The words of the text thus considered, do undoubtedly lead us to this conclusion, and teach us this doctrine, viz.

That it is the duty of ministers of the gospel, in the work of their ministry, to follow the example of their great Lord and Master.

And this is what I would by divine assistance make the subject of my present discourse.

And I propose to handle this subject in the following method.

I. I would observe wherein ministers of the gospel ought to follow the example of Christ.

II. Give some reasons why they should follow his example.

III. I would endeavor to make a proper application of those things to myself, and others that are called to this work of the ministry.

IV. Shew what improvement should be made of them by the people of this church and congregation.

I. Then, I would shew wherein ministers of the gospel ought in the work of their ministry, to follow the example of their great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

And here,

1. In general, ministers should follow their Lord and Master in all those excellent virtues, and in that universal and eminent holiness of life, which he set an example of in his human nature.

The ministers of Christ should be persons of the same spirit that their Lord was of: The same spirit of humility and lowliness of heart; for the servant is not greater than his Lord. They should be of the same spirit of heavenly mindedness and contempt of the glory, wealth and pleasures of this world: They should be of the same spirit of devotion and fervent love to God: They should follow the example of his prayerfulness; of whom we read from time to time of his retiring from the world, away from the noise and applauses of the multitudes, into mountains and solitary places for secret prayer, and holy converse with his Father; and once of his rising up in the morning a great while before day, and going and departing into a solitary place to pray, Mark i. 35....and another time, of his going out into a mountain to pray, and continuing all night in prayer to God, Luke vi. 12. Ministers should follow Christ's example, in his strict, constant and inflexible observance of the commands which God had given him, touching what he should do and what he should say; he spake nothing of himself, but those things which the Father had commanded him, those he spake, and always did those things that pleased him, and continued in thorough obedience

and the greatest trials, and through the greatest opposition that ever there was any instance of. Ministers should be persons of the same quiet, lamblike spirit that Christ was of, the same spirit of submission to God's will, and patience under afflictions, and meekness towards men, of the same calmness and composure of spirit under reproaches and sufferings from the malignity of evil men; of the same spirit of forgiveness of injuries; of the same spirit of charity, of fervent love and extensive benevolence; the same disposition to pity the miserable, to weep with those that weep, to help men under their calamities of both soul and body, to hear and grant the requests of the needy, and relieve the afflicted; the same spirit of condescension to the poor and mean, tenderness and gentleness towards the weak, and great and effectual love to enemies. They should also be of the same spirit of zeal, diligence and selfdenial for the glory of God, and advancement of his kingdom, and for the good of mankind; for which things' sake Christ went through the greatest labors, and endured the most extreme sufferings.

2. More particularly should ministers of the gospel follow the example of their great Master, in the manner in which they seek the salvation and happiness of the souls of men. They should follow his example of love to souls: Though it be impossible that they should love them to so great a degree, yet they should have the same spirit of love to them, and concern for their salvation, according to their capacity. Love to men's souls in Christ was far above any regard he had to his temporal interest, his ease, his honor, his meat and drink; and so it should be with his ministers. They should have the same spirit of compassion to men under their spiritual calamities and miseries, that he had of whom we read, Mark vi 34. "That when he came out and saw much people, he was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." The word translated *moved with compassion*, signifies, that he was most sensibly affected, and had his inmost bowels moved with pity. And again we

read, Luke xix. That when Christ was riding to Jerusalem, that wicked city, but a few days before his crucifixion, and was come to the descent of the Mount of Olives, where he had a fair view of the city, when he beheld it, he wept over it, on account of the misery and ruin they had brought themselves into danger of by their sin; although the sin by which especially they had made themselves thus miserable, was their vile treatment of him; (for Jerusalem was a city that had been peculiarly injurious to him) and though Christ knew how cruelly he should be treated in that city before that week was past, how he there should be set at nought, and with great malignity bound, falsely accused and condemned, reviled, spit upon, scourged and crucified: Yet all does not prevent his most affectionate tears of compassion towards them. "When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou (thou as wicked as thou art, and as vile as thou hast been in thy treatment of me; even thou) the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." (Compare Matth. xxiii. 37, and Luke xiii. 34.) One would have thought he would have been more concerned for himself than Jerusalem, who had such a dreadful cup to drink, and was to suffer such extreme things by the cruelty of Jerusalem that week. But he as it were forgets his own sorrow and death, and weeps over the misery of his cruel enemies.

Ministers should imitate their great master in his fervent prayers for the good of the souls of men. We find it to be Christ's manner whenever he undertook any thing of special importance in the work of his ministry, first to retire and pour out his soul in extraordinary prayer to his Father. Thus when he was about to enter on a journey, and go a circuit throughout all Galilee, to preach in their synagogues, "he rose up a great while before day, and went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed," Mark i. 35....39. And when he was about to choose his twelve apostles, and send them out to preach the gospel, he first *went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God,*

Luke vi. 12, &c. And the night before his crucifixion, wherein he offered up himself a sacrifice for the souls of men, he pours out his soul in extraordinary prayer, for those he was about to die for, as we have an account in John xvii. That wonderful and most affecting prayer of his, was not so much for himself as for his people. Although he knew what amazing sufferings he was to undergo the next day, yet he seems as it were to be unmindful of himself, and to have his heart all taken up with concern about his disciples; which he manifests in his spending so much time in comforting and counselling them, and praying for them with great affection, compassion, earnest care and fatherly tenderness. And the prayers that he made in the garden of Gethsemane, under the amazing view of the cup he was to drink the next day, seem to be intercessory; especially the last of the three prayers which he there made, *when being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground:* When he did not pray that the cup might pass from him, as he had done before, but that *God's will might be done.* (Compare Luke xxii. 44, with Matth. xxvi. 42.) That prayer, as the apostle teaches us, Heb. v. 6, 7, was a prayer that he put up as our High Priest; and therefore must be a prayer of intercession for us, a prayer offered up with his blood which he sweat in his agony; as prayers were wont to be offered up with the blood of the sacrifices in the temple. His prayer at that time, *Thy will be done,* was not only an expression of submission, but had the form of a petition, as it is in the Lord's prayer. He prayed that God's will might be done in *his* being enabled *to do the will of God,* persevering in obedience unto death; and in the success of his sufferings; which might in an eminent manner be called the will of God, as it is in Psal. xl. 7, 8. "Then said I, Lo, I come.....I delight to do thy will, O my God."

Ministers should follow the example of Christ in his diligence and laboriousness in his work. "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil," Acts x. 38. So abundant was he in labors, that oftentimes he

scarcely allowed himself time to eat or drink; insomuch that his friends sometimes went out to lay hold of him, saying, "He is beside himself," Mark iii. 20, 21. That three years and an half of his public ministry was so filled with action and labor, that one of his disciples that constantly attended him, and was an eye witness of his activity, tells us, that if *all that he did should be written, the world would not contain the books.*

Ministers should follow the example of Christ, in his readiness not only to labor, but suffer for the salvation of souls, to spend and be spent for them. In this respect the Apostle Paul imitated his Lord and Master. Philip. ii 17. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Col. i. 24. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church." 2 Cor. xii 15. "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you." Christ, in his prayers, labors and sufferings for the souls of men, is represented as travailing in birth with them. Isai. liii. 11. "He shall see of the travail of his soul." In like manner should ministers travail for the conversion and salvation of their hearers. They should imitate the faithfulness of Christ in his ministry, in speaking whatsoever God had commanded him, and declaring the whole counsel of God. They should imitate him in the manner of his preaching; who taught not as the Scribes, but with authority, boldly, zealously and fervently; insisting chiefly on the most important things in religion, being much in warning men of the danger of damnation, setting forth the greatness of the future misery of the ungodly; insisting not only on the outward, but also the inward and spiritual duties of religion; being much in declaring the great provocation and danger of spiritual pride, and a selfrighteous disposition; yet much insisting on the necessity and importance of inherent holiness, and the practice of piety. Behaving himself with admirable wisdom in all that he said and did in his ministry, amidst the many difficulties, enemies and temptations he was surrounded with, wonderfully adapting his discourses

to persons, seasons and occasions. Isai l. 4. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

Ministers should follow their Master in his zeal, so wonderfully mixed and tempered with gentleness and condescension in his dealing with souls; preaching the gospel to the poor, and taking a gracious notice from time to time of little children. And they should imitate their Lord in his following the work of the ministry, not from mercenary views, or for the sake of worldly advantages, but for God's glory, and men's salvation; and in having his heart engaged in his work; it being his great delight, and his meat to do the will of his Father, and finish his work, John iv. 34, and having his heart set on the success of his great undertaking in the salvation of souls; this being the joy that was set before him, for which he run his race, endured the cross, and despised the shame; his delight in the prospect of the eternal salvation of souls, more than countervailing the dread he had of his extreme sufferings. Many waters could not quench his love, neither could the floods drown it, for his love was stronger than death; yea, than the mighty pains and torments of such a death.

I now proceed to the

II. Thing proposed in the handling of this subject, which was to give some reasons why ministers of the gospel should follow the example of their great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

1. They should follow his example, because he is their Lord and Master. Christ, as he is a divine person, is the Lord of heaven and earth, and so one of infinite dignity, to whom our supreme respect is due; and on that account he is infinitely worthy that we should regard, not only his precepts, but example. The infinite honorableness of his person recommends his virtues, and a conformity to them as our greatest dignity and honor.

Christ is more especially the Lord of Christians; who are therefore under special obligations to follow him. He is their shepherd, and surely the flock should follow their shepherd. He is the captain of their salvation; and it becomes soldiers to follow their captain and leader. He is their head; not only their head of rule and authority, but their head of influence and communication, their vital head, and Christians are members of his body; but members, as partakers of the life and spirit of the head, are conformed to the head.

But Christ is still in a more peculiar manner the Lord and Master of ministers of the gospel, as they are not only members of his church, but the officers of his kingdom, and the dignified servants of his family. It is the manner of a people to imitate their prince, but especially the ministers of his kingdom, and officers of his household. It is the duty of the whole army to follow their general, but especially of those officers that have a commission under him

2. Ministers of the gospel are in some respects called and devoted to the same work and business that Christ himself was appointed to. Ministers are not men's mediators; for there is but one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus: They are not our priests to make atonement and work out righteousness for us; for Christ by one offering has perfected forever them that are sanctified: They are not lords over God's heritage; for one is their master, even Christ. But yet ministers of the gospel, as Christ's servants and officers under him, are appointed to promote the designs of that great work of Christ, the work of salvation. It is the work that ministers are devoted to; and therefore they are represented as coworkers with Christ. 2 Cor. vi. 1. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Christ is the Saviour of the souls of men; ministers also, are spoken of in scripture as saving men's souls. 1 Tim iv. 16. "In doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Rom. x. 14. "If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them." 1 Cor.

ix. 22. "That I might by all means save some." And whereas it is said Obad. 21. "Saviours shall come upon Mount Zion;" ministers of the gospel are supposed to be there intended.

The work of ministers is in many respects like the work that Christ himself was appointed to, as the Saviour of men; and especially the same with the work which Christ does in his prophetical office; only with this difference, that ministers are to speak and act wholly under Christ, as taught of him, as holding forth his word, and by light and strength communicated from him. Christ himself after his baptism, followed the work of the ministry: He was a minister of the true sanctuary (Heb. viii 2) he spake and acted as his Father's minister; was a minister of the gospel, and as such preached and administered sacraments. Pastors of churches are ministers of the same gospel; but in their ministry they act as the ministers of Christ. Jesus Christ is the great Bishop of souls; ministers are also bishops under him. Christ came into the world *that he might be the light of the world*; ministers are set to be lights unto the churches, and are also said to be *the light of the world*. Matth. v. 14. Christ is the *bright and morning star*; ministers are *stars in Christ's hand*. Christ is *the messenger of the covenant*; ministers are called *messengers of the Lord of Hosts*. Christ is his people's *shepherd, the good shepherd, the great shepherd of his sheep*. Ministers are also frequently called shepherds, and are directed to feed the flock of Christ, which he purchased with his own blood.

Seeing therefore it is thus, that the work that ministers are called and devoted to, is no other than the work of Christ, or the work that Christ does, certainly they ought to do his work; which they do not do, unless they imitate him, and do as he does, or as he hath set them an example.

3. The example of Christ is most worthy of ministers' imitation. His example was perfect, without error, blemish or defect; and therefore worthy to be made our rule, and to be regarded and followed without exception, limitation or re-

serve ; unless in those things which he did that were proper to his peculiar office. Christ's virtue was not only perfect, but was exercised in those circumstances, and under those trials, that rendered his virtuous acts vastly the most amiable of any that ever appeared in any creature whether man or angel. If we consider the perfection of the virtue that Christ exercised, his virtue did exceed that of the most eminent saints, more than the purest gold exceeds the meanest and foulest ore : And if we consider the manner of its exercise, and the trials under which it was exercised, and the blessed fruits it has brought forth, so his virtue exceeds that of all other perfectly innocent creatures, and even of the brightest angel, as the sun in its glory exceeds the stars.

And this example was set us in our own nature, and so is especially fitted for our imitation. There was in the man Christ Jesus, who was one of us, and dwelt among us, such exercises of virtue as became our state and circumstances in the world, as those who dwell in frail flesh and blood, and as members of humane society, and dwellers in such a world of sorrow and death.

And then these amiable exercises of virtue in Christ, were exhibited chiefly in the things which he did in that work wherein ministers are called to act as coworkers with him. The bright and glorious example of Christ that is set before us, is chiefly in what he did during the three years and an half of his public ministry ; and in the devotion, heavenly mindedness, humility, patience, meekness, forgiveness, selfdenial and charity, which he exercised in the labors and sufferings he went through for the good of the souls of men: And therefore is especially set for the imitation of those who are set apart that they may make it the whole business of their lives to seek the same good of souls.

4. Ministers should follow that example of Christ which has been spoken of, because if they are fit for ministers, and are such as have any right to take that work upon themselves, Christ has set them this example in what he has done for their souls. " I have given you an example (says Christ in

the text) that you should do as I have done to you." Ministers should be animated in this work by a great love to the souls of men, and should be ready to spend and be spent for them; for Christ loved them, and gave himself for them: He loved them with a love stronger than death. They should have compassion to men under their spiritual miseries, as Christ had pity on them. They should be much in prayer for the people of their flock, considering how Christ prayed and agonized for them, in tears of blood. They should travail in birth with the souls that are committed to their care, seeing their own salvation is the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul. They should exercise a meek and condescending spirit to the mean and weak and poor, and should as it were wash the feet of Christ's disciples; considering how Christ condescended to them, when they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, and abased himself to wash their feet.

The chief trials of Christ's virtue, and so their most bright and eminent exercises were in the abasement, labor and suffering, that he was the subject of for our salvation. Which certainly may well endear those virtues to us, and greatly engage us to imitate that example: So the things whereof this example consists, were things by which we have infinite benefit, without which we should have been unspeakably miserable forever and ever, and by virtue of which we have the glorious privilege of the children of God, and have a full title to the crown of exceeding glory, and pleasures for evermore, at God's right hand.

III. I now proceed, as was proposed, in the third place, to apply what has been said to myself, and others that are employed in this sacred work of the gospel ministry, and to such as are about to undertake it, or are candidates for it; and particularly to him that is now to be solemnly set apart to this work in this place.

We are those to whom these things especially belong: We may hear Christ saying to us this day, "I have given you

an example, that ye should do as I have done." For the words of Christ in the text were not only spoken to the twelve, but are also spoken unto us. We have now had represented to us, though in a very imperfect manner, the example that Christ has set, and what reasons there are that we, above all others, should imitate it.

It is not only our great duty, but will be our greatest honor to imitate Christ, and do the work that he has done, and so act as coworkers with him.

There are two kinds of persons that are given to Christ, and appointed and devoted of God to be his servants, to be employed with Christ, and under him, in his great work of the salvation of the souls of men; and they are angels and ministers. The angels are all of them, even the most exalted of them, subjected of God the Father to our Redeemer, and given to him as his servants, to be subservient to the great designs of his saving and glorifying his elect; Heb. i. 14. "Are they not all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" And doubtless, they were created for this very end; God made them for his Son, to be subservient to him in this great work; which seems to be the chief design of all God's works. And the employment of ministers of the gospel in this respect, is like that of the glorious angels. The principalities and powers in heavenly places, esteem it not any debasement, but their great honor, to be employed as Christ's ministers in this work; for therein they are employed as the ministers of God, in the greatest and most honorable of all God's works; that work of God wherein his glory is chiefly displayed, and which his heart was chiefly upon from eternity. It is the honor of the Son of God himself, that he is appointed to this work. It was because God the Father infinitely loved his Son, and delighted to put honor upon him, that he appointed him to be the author of that glorious work of the salvation of men. And when we consider the greatness, importance and excellency of it, we have reason to be astonished at the condescension of God, that he would ever improve mere creatures as coworkers and min-

isters of Christ in this affair ; *for who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. ii. 6. " Who is fit, or worthy ? Who is equal to a work of such dignity, and vast importance ?" Especially have we reason to wonder that God will employ, not only holy and glorious angels, but feeble, frail, sinful worms of the dust, in this work, who need redemption themselves : And yet the honor that is put upon faithful ministers, is in some respects greater than that of the angels : They seem to be that kind of servants that are the most dignified of the two. For Christ makes his angels to be ministering spirits unto them, unto the faithful ministers ; and the angels are their angels : As faithful ministers of the gospel are not only ministers to the church, but dignified members of the church, that spouse of the king of glory, on whom the most glorious angels, the highest ministers in the court of heaven, are appointed to attend. And then Christ seems especially to delight to carry on his work of the salvation of souls, through the ministrations of men, who have that nature that Christ is united to, and that are of those sons of men with whom he had his delight before the world was made. So it is by the ministration of men, that the scriptures are given ; they were the penmen of the holy bible ; and by them the gospel is preached to the world : By them ordinances are administered, and, through their ministrations, especially, souls are converted. When Christ himself was employed in the work of the ministry, in the time of his humiliation, but few, comparatively, were brought home to him, immediately by his ministrations : It pleased Christ to reserve this honor for his disciples and ministers, after his ascension, to whom he promised that they should, in this respect, do greater works than he, Job xiv. 12, and acccordingly it was by their preaching that the gentile world was converted, and Satan's kingdom overthrown. Thus God delights " to perfect praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, that he may still the enemy and the avenger."

It will be our great honor that we are called to this work of Christ, if therein we follow him ; for therein we shall be like the Son of God : But if we are unfaithful in this office, and

do not imitate our master, our offence will be heinous in proportion to the dignity of our office, and our final and everlasting disgrace and ignominy proportionably great; and we, who in honor are exalted up to heaven, shall be cast down proportionably low in hell.

Let us further consider, that our following the example of Christ in the work of the ministry, is the way to enjoy the sensible joyful presence of Christ with us. The disciples had the comfort of Christ's presence and conversation by following him, and going where he went. When we cease to follow him, he will go from us, and we shall soon lose sight of him.

Our being conformed to Christ's example, will also be the way for us to be conformed to him, and partake with him in his privileges: It is the way for us to have his joy fulfilled in us. Christ, in doing the work to which the father appointed him, obtained a glorious victory over his enemies, and having spoiled principalities and powers, triumphed over them. If we imitate his example, it will be the way for us in like manner to conquer principalities and powers, yea, to be much more than conquerors: It will be the way for us always to triumph in Christ Jesus. It will be the way for us to obtain success in our ministry, and actually to be made the happy instruments of the eternal salvation of souls. Christ has not only *told* us, but *shewn* us the way to success in our business, and the way to victory over all that oppose us in it. And our imitating Christ in our ministry, will be the way for us to be partakers with him in his glory; the way for us in like manner to be approved, and openly honored and rewarded by God; the way to be brought to sit with Christ on his throne, as he is set down with the Father on his throne. And as Christ is now exalted to shine as the bright luminary and glory of heaven, so our following his example, will be the way for us to be exalted, to *shine* with him, "as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel xii. 3. And as Christ in heaven rejoices in his success, and will receive his church, presented to him without spot, as his everlasting crown; so our imitating Christ in our work,

will be the way to partake with Christ in this joy, and have the souls whose salvation we are the instruments of, to be our crown of rejoicing forever. Thus Christ and we shall rejoice together in that world of glory and joy where there is no more labor or sorrow. And we must enter into that joy and glory, in the way of following Christ in our work ; there is no other way for ministers to enter there.

And that we may thus follow Christ's example, and be partakers with him in his glory, we had need to be much in prayer for his Spirit. Christ himself, though the eternal Son of God, obtained the Holy Spirit for himself in a way of prayer, Luke iii. 21, 22. "Jesus being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon him." If we have the spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we shall have Christ himself thereby living in us, and then we shall undoubtedly live like him If that fountain of light dwells richly in us, we shall shine like him, and so shall be burning and shining lights.

That we may *be* and *behave* like Christ, we should earnestly seek much acquaintance with him, and much love to him, and be much in secret converse with him. It is natural, and as it were necessary for us to imitate those whom we are much acquainted and conversant with, and have a strong affection for.

And in order to our imitating Christ in the work of the ministry, in any tolerable degree, we had need not to have our hearts overcharged, and time filled up with worldly affections, cares and pursuits. The duties of a minister that have been recommended, are absolutely inconsitent with a mind much taken up with worldly profit, glory, amusements and entertainments.

And another thing that is of very great importance, in order to our doing the work that Christ did, is, that we take heed that the religion we promote, be that same religion that Christ taught and promoted, and not any of its counterfeits and delusive appearances, or any thing substituted by the subtle devices of Satan, or vain imaginations of men in lieu of it. If

we are zealous and very diligent to promote religion, but do not take good care to distinguish true from false religion, we shall be in danger of doing much more hurt than good, with all our zeal and activity.

I come now to the

IV. and last thing at first proposed, viz. to shew what improvement should be made of what has been said, by the people of this church and congregation, who are now about solemnly to commit their souls to the charge of him whom they have chosen to be their pastor, and who is now about to be set apart to that office.

And YOU, MY BRETHREN, as all of you have immortal souls to save, if you have considered the things that have been spoken, cannot but be sensible, that it not only greatly concerns your elect pastor to take heed how he behaves himself in his great work, wherein he is to act as a coworker with Christ for your salvation; but that it infinitely concerns you how you receive him, and behave towards him. Seeing that it is for *your* eternal salvation that he is appointed to watch and labor; and seeing his business is to do the work of Christ for you, it is natural and easy to infer, that your reception and entertainment of him should in some respect imitate the church's reception of Jesus Christ. Gal. iv. 14. "My temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." Christ, in the text, commands those whom he sends, to follow his example, and then in the 20th verse following, he directs those to whom he sends them, how to treat them. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." Seeing the work of your minister is in some respects the same with the work of Christ, and he is to be appointed and devoted to do this work for your souls in particular, surely you should esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake, and do all that is in your power to help him, and put him under the best advantages to imitate his great master *in* this work,

to give himself wholly *to* his work, as Christ did during the time of his ministry, and to be successful *in* his work. And as it was observed before, that it is impossible that ministers should in any tolerable degree imitate the example of Christ in their work, if their minds are overcharged with worldly cares and concerns, you ought so to provide for him and support him, that he shall have no need to entangle himself with these things; otherwise you will not only bring a great temptation upon him, which will vastly tend to hinder him in the work of Christ among you, but will for the sake of sparing a little of your worldly substance to yourselves, foolishly and miserably starve your own souls, and the souls of your children, and will but cheat yourselves; for you will not be in the way to prosper either in your spiritual or temporal concerns. The way to have your houses filled with plenty, is to "honor the Lord with your substance, and with the first fruits of all your increase," Prov. iii. 9.

And as it is your duty and interest well to support your minister, so it concerns you to pray earnestly for him, and each one to do what in him lies in all respects to encourage and help him, and strengthen his hands, by attending diligently to his ministry, receiving the truth in love, treating him with the honor due to a messenger of Christ, carefully avoiding all contention with him, and one with another. And take heed in particular, that you do not forsake him to follow those, who under pretence of extraordinary purity, are doubtless doing the devil's work, in separating themselves, and endeavoring to draw off others from the ministers and churches in the land in general.

If you think I have spoken something freely to you, I hope it will be considered, that this is probably the last time you will ever hear me speak from the pulpit, and that I shall never see you again till we see one another in the invisible eternal world, where these things will open to us all in their just importance.

And now nothing is left but to express my sincerest wishes and prayers, that the God of all grace would be with you,

and your elect pastor, and that he would give you in him a great and long lasting blessing, that you may enjoy much of the presence of Christ with you in him; that in him may be made up the great loss you sustained by the death of your former faithful and eminent pastor, whose praise was in all the churches; and that you may receive him as you ought to receive a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, and may be a great comfort to him, and may receive great spiritual and eternal benefit by his means; and that you may be each other's crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

SERMON XXXI.*

The Sorrows of the Bereaved spread before Jesus.

MATTHEW xiv. 12.

AND HIS DISCIPLES CAME AND TOOK UP THE BODY AND BURIED IT, AND WENT AND TOLD JESUS.

CONCERNING these words I would observe three things.

1. On what occasion that was, that we have an account of in the text....It was on occasion of the death of John the Baptist, who was a person whose business it had been to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. He was a minister of Jesus Christ, and had been improved to do great service, was an instrument of much good to many in Judea and Jerusalem, in his life time. He was cruelly murthered by Herod, at the instigation of Herodias, having exposed himself to her malice by faithfully reproving them for their incestuous wickedness.

* Preached at Hatfield, September 2, 1741, being the day of the interment of the Rev. Mr. William Williams.

2. We may observe who the persons were spoken of in the text; they were those that had been the disciples of John the Baptist, that had sat at his feet to hear him preach the gospel, that were his constant followers, that were with him as those that received great benefit by his ministry, and were as it were his children.

3. We may observe their behavior on this occasion, consisting in two things.

(1.) That whereby they shewed their regard to the remains of the deceased, *They took up the body and buried it*: It had been used in a barbarous manner by others, that had also been his hearers, and were under special obligations to have treated him with honor. They cruelly murdered him, by severing his head from his body; and his head was carried in a charger to Herodias, that she, instead of paying that respect that was due to the remains of so venerable a person, might have her malice and cruelty gratified by such a spectacle, and that she might thence take occasion to insult the dead. While that part of the dead body was thus used by Herodias, his disciples out of respect and honor to their master and teacher, decently interred the rest.

2. That which they did, consequent on this, for God's glory and their own good, *They went and told Jesus*. Him they knew to be one that their master John, while he lived, had testified a great regard to. Jesus was he whose forerunner John was; whom he had preached, and of whom he had said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world:" And, "This is he, of whom I said, after me cometh one that is preferred before me;" and whom he saw, and bare record that *this is the Son of God*. And probably they knew that Christ was one that had put great honor upon John their teacher in his life time. For he, though he was the Son of God, and John's Maker and Saviour, yet came to him to be baptized of him, and had said of him, that "among those that were born of women, there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

It was now a sorrowful time with John's disciples; when they were thus bereaved of him whose teachings they had sat under. And the manner of his death was doubtless very grievous to them. They were like a company of sorrowful, distressed, bereaved children; and what do they do in their sorrows, but go to Jesus with their complaint. The first thing that they do, after paying proper regards to the remains of their dear master, is to go to Christ, to spread their case before him, seeking comfort and help from him. Thus they sought their own benefit.

And probably one end of their immediately going and telling Jesus was, that he being informed of it, might conduct himself accordingly, as his wisdom should direct, for the interest of his own kingdom. When so great a person as John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, was thus martyred, it was a great event, in which the common cause, in which both Christ and he were engaged, was greatly concerned: It was therefore fit that he that was at the head of the whole affair should be informed of it, for his future conduct in the affairs of his kingdom. And accordingly we find that Jesus seems immediately to be influenced in his conduct by these tidings; as you may see in the next verse: "When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart." Thus John's disciples sought God's glory.

The observation from the words that I would make the subject of my discourse at this time is this:

When any one is taken away by death, that has been eminent in the work of the gospel ministry, such as are thereby bereaved, should go and spread their calamity before Jesus.

Though in handling this subject I might particularly speak to several propositions that are contained in this observation, and many things might profitably be insisted on under it, if there were room for it within the compass of a sermon; yet I shall only give the *reasons of the doctrine*, and then hasten to the application.

The following reasons may be given why, in case of such an awful dispensation of Providence, those that are concerned in it, and bereaved by it, should go and spread their sorrows before Jesus.

1. Christ is one that is ready to pity the afflicted. It is natural for persons that are bereaved of any that are dear to them, and for all under deep sorrow, to seek some that they may declare and lay open their griefs to, that they have good reason to think will pity them, and have a fellow feeling with them of their distress. The heart that is full of grief wants vent, and desires to pour out its complaint; but it seeks a compassionate friend to pour it out before.

Christ is such an one, above all others. He of old, before his incarnation, manifested himself full of compassion towards his people; for that is Jesus that is spoken of, Isai. lxiii. 9. "In all their affliction he was afflicted; and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." And when he was upon earth in his state of humiliation, he was the most wonderful instance of a tender, pitiful, compassionate spirit that ever appeared in the world. How often are we told of his having compassion on one and another? So Matth. xv. 32. "Then Jesus called his disciples, and said unto them, I have compassion on the multitude." So he had compassion on the man possessed with devils, Mark v. 19. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done to thee, and hath had compassion on thee." So we read of his pitying the mother, that was bereaved of her son, Luke vii. 13. There we have an account, when Christ went into the city of Nain, and met the people carrying out a dead man, the only son of his mother, that was a widow, that when he saw her he had compassion on her. So when the two blind men that sat by the way side, cried to Jesus, as he passed by, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David," we read that Jesus had compassion on them, Matth. xx. 39. So we read of his being moved with compassion

Matth. xiv. 14. "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and when he saw them he was moved with compassion." His speeches to his disciples were full of compassion; especially those that he uttered a little before his death, of which we have an account in the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John. His miracles were almost universally deeds of pity to persons under affliction.

And seeing such a pitiful heart appeared in him on all occasions, no wonder that John's disciples, when bereaved of their dear guide and teacher, and their hearts were full of sorrow, came to him for pity: Which likewise induced Mary and Martha to come and fall down, pouring out their tears at Jesus' feet, when their dear brother Lazarus was dead: Other Jews came to comfort them, before Jesus came, whom they little regarded, but when they heard that Jesus was come, they soon go and spread their sorrows before him; they were assured that he would pity them; and their expectation was not frustrated; for he was most tenderly affected and moved at their tears: We are told that on that occasion he groaned in spirit and was troubled, John xi. 33. And when he came to the grave, it is observed, and a special note seems to be set upon it, that he wept, verse 35.

He was one that wept with those that wept: And indeed it was mere pity that brought him into the world, and induced him not only to shed tears but to shed his blood: He poured out his blood as water on the earth, out of compassion to the poor, miserable children of men. And when do we ever read of any one person coming to him when on earth, with an heavy heart, or under any kind of sorrow or distress for pity or help, but what met with a kind and compassionate reception?

And he has the *same compassion* now he is *ascended into glory*: There is still the same encouragement for bereaved ones to go and spread their sorrows before him.

Afflicted persons love to speak of their sorrows to them that have had EXPERIENCE of affliction, and know what sorrow is: But there is none on earth or in heaven that ever had so

much experience of sorrow as Christ: Therefore he knows how to pity the sorrowful, and especially may we be confident that he is ready to pity those that are bereaved of a faithful MINISTER, because such a bereavement is a calamity that concerns the *souls of men*; and Christ hath especially shewn his pity to mens' souls; for it was chiefly for them that he died: To relieve the miseries of the soul especially, is it that he hath provided; and it was from pity to the souls of men that he made that provision for them that he hath done, in appointing such an order of men as GOSPEL MINISTERS, and in sending them forth to preach the gospel: It was because he had compassion on men's souls, that he hath appointed ministers to watch for souls.

2. Christ *has purchased all that persons need under such a bereavement.* He has purchased all that miserable men stand in need of under all their calamities, and comfort under every sort of affliction; and therefore his invitation to those that "Labor and are heavy laden," to come to him for rest, may be understood in the most extensive sense, to extend to those that labor under any kind of burden of sin or sorrow, and to all that are "heavy laden" with either natural or moral evil: He has purchased divine cordials and supports for those hearts that are ready to sink: He has purchased all needed comfort and help for the widow and the fatherless: He has purchased a sanctified improvement and fruit of affliction, for all such as come to him, and spread their sorrows before him. He has purchased those things that are sufficient to make up their loss, that are bereaved of a great blessing in an eminent minister of the gospel: It is he that has purchased those divine blessings, those influences and fruits of the Spirit of God, that the work of the ministry is appointed to be the means of. Faithful ministers themselves are the fruits of his purchase; and he has purchased all those gifts and graces whereby ministers do become faithful, eminent and successful; and therefore when he "ascended up on high, he received such gifts for men;" Eph. iv. 8. &c.....So that he has purchased all that

is needful to make up for the loss that is sustained by the death of an eminent minister.

3. Christ is able to afford all that help that is needed in such a case. His power and his wisdom are as sufficient as his purpose, and answerable to his compassions. By the bowels of his mercies, the love and tenderness of his heart, he is disposed to help those that are in affliction; and his ability is answerable to his disposition. He is able to support the heart under the heaviest sorrows, and to give light in the greatest darkness: He can divide the thickest cloud with beams of heavenly light and comfort: He is one that gives songs in the night, and turns the shadow of death into the morning: He has power to make up the loss of those that are bereaved by the death of the most eminent minister. His own presence to the bereaved is sufficient; if the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls be present, how much more is this than enough to supply the want of any under Shepherd? And then he is able to furnish others with like gifts and graces for that work.

Persons under sorrowful bereavements are ready to go and lay open their sorrows to them that they think will be ready to pity them, though they know they can but pity them, and cannot help them. How much more is here in such a case to induce us to go to Jesus, who is not only so ready to pity, but so able to help, able abundantly more than to fill up the breach, and able to turn all our sorrows into joy?

4. The consideration of the special office of Christ, and the work that he has undertaken for his people, should engage them to go and spread such a calamity, as the bereavement of a faithful and eminent minister, before him: For he is the *Head of the body*, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and lord of the harvest; that has undertaken the care of the whole church, and has the absolute government of it in his hands, and the supreme disposal and management of all ecclesiastical affairs, to whom belongs the care of the universal church, and every part of it, with respect to its supply with such guides, officers and ordinances, as it stands in need of. In case of bereavement of an eminent minister, it was he that

sent forth such a minister, appointed him his charge and furnished him for his work, continued and assisted him in it, and in his own time removed him; and it is he that, in such a case, by his office, has the care of filling up the vacancy, and furnishing, establishing and assisting successors, and supplying all the wants of bereaved churches. It is surely therefore suitable and natural to go to him in such a case, and spread such a calamity before him.

APPLICATION.

I come now to apply what has been said to the SORROWFUL OCCASION of our being thus assembled at this time, even the death of that aged SERVANT of God, who has long been eminent in the work of the gospel ministry in this place.

There are many that may well look on themselves as nearly concerned in this awful Providence, and sharers in the bereavement; all of whom should be directed by this doctrine, to go and spread their affliction before JESUS, that compassionate, allsufficient head of the church, and Savior of the body, that merciful and faithful High Priest, that knows how to pity the afflicted.

And particularly it now becomes and concerns you, that belong to this *church and congregation*, that are bereaved of your aged and eminent PASTOR and FATHER, that has so long been a great blessing to you, now to go and tell JESUS.

The disciples of John, spoken of in the text, were those that were ordinarily under his instruction, and were his constant hearers, as it has been with you with respect to your aged PASTOR, that is now taken from you. Therefore be exhorted to do as they did. Do not think that you have finished your duty, when you have taken up his body and buried it, and have shewn respect to his memory and remains at his funeral: This is the least part of your duty: That which mainly concerns you under this awful Providence, is between Christ and your own souls.

God has now taken away from you an able and faithful minister of the New Testament, one that has long been a FATHER to you, and a FATHER in our Israel, a person of uncommon natural abilities, and distinguished learning, a great divine, of very comprehensive knowledge, and of a solid, accurate judgment.....Judiciousness and wisdom were eminently his character. He was one of eminent gifts, qualifying him for all parts of the work of the ministry; and there appeared a savor of holiness, in his exercise of those gifts in public and private: So that he improved them as a servant of Christ, and a man of God. He was not negligent of the talents which his lord had committed to him; you need not be told with what constant diligence he improved them, how studious at home, and how laborious in his public work: He ever devoted himself to the work to which he was called: The ministry which he had received of the Lord, he took heed to fulfil, and pursued it with a constant and stedfast, even mind, through all its difficulties.

You know his manner of addressing heaven in his public prayers with you and for you, with what sanctity, humility, faith and fervency, he seemed to apply himself to the FATHER of lights, from time to time, when he stood in this desk as your mouth to God, and interceding for you, pleading with God through the grace and merits of a glorious MEDIATOR. And you know his manner of applying himself to you, when he came to you, from time to time, in the name of the Lord.

In his PUBLIC ministry, he mainly insisted on the most weighty and important things of religion; he was eminently an evangelical preacher; evangelical subjects seemed to be his delight: CHRIST was the great subject of his preaching; and he much insisted on those things that did nearly concern the essence and power of religion; and had a peculiar faculty of judiciously and clearly handling the doctrines he insisted on, and treating properly whatever subject he took in hand; and of selecting the most weighty arguments and motives to enforce and set home those things that concern Christian experience and practice. His subjects were always weighty,

and his manner of treating them peculiarly happy, shewing the strength and accuracy of his judgment, and ever breathing forth the SPIRIT OF PIETY, and a deep sense of the things he delivered, on his heart. His sermons were none of them mean, but were all solid, wise compositions. His words were none of them vain, but all were weighty.

And you need not be told with what weight the welfare of your souls seemed to lie on his heart, and how he instructed, and reproved, and warned, and exhorted you, with all authority, and with a fatherly tender concern for your eternal good. And with what wisdom he presided in the house of God, and guided its affairs; and also counselled and directed you in private, under your particular soul exercises and difficulties. You know how he has brought you up (for most of you have been trained up from your childhood under his ministry) with what authority, and with what judgment, prudence and steadiness, he has conducted you, as well as meekness and gentleness. You know his manner of going in and out among you, how exemplary his walk and conversation has been, with what gravity, judgment and savor of holiness, he has walked before you, as a man of God.

You have enjoyed great advantages for your souls' good, under his ministry: That you had such a minister was your privilege and your honor; he has been an ornament to the town of HATFIELD; and his presence and conversation amongst you has been both profitable and pleasant; for though it was such as did peculiarly command AWE and RESPECT, yet it was at the same time, HUMBLE and CONDESCENDING: It tended both to instruct and entertain those that he conversed with: As a wise man, and endued with knowledge, he *shewed out of good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.*

But now it hath pleased an holy God to take him away from you: You will see his face and hear his voice no more, in the land of the living: You will no more have the comfort and benefits of his presence with you, and the exercise of his ministry among you.

Therefore now go to Jesus, the Supreme Head of the church, and *Bishop of souls*. Your pastor is dead, and will not live again till the last day: But Christ, the *chief Shepherd*, though *he was dead*, is *now alive! And behold he lives for evermore*. *He ever lives* to provide for his church, and to guide and feed his flock. Go to that Jesus whom your deceased pastor preached, and to whom he earnestly invited you while he lived, and give thanks for the many blessings you enjoyed in him. Remember how you have *received and heard*, and *hold fast* that no man take your crown;* and go and *humble yourselves also before him*, that you made no better improvement of the ministry of your pastor while he lived; and beg of him a sanctified improvement of his awful hand in taking him away, and that he would help you to remember his warnings and counsels that you too much slighted whilst you had them, lest those warnings and counsels cry against you, and rise up in judgment against you another day, lest you see your pastor, that so affectionately and earnestly, and so often, and for so long a time continued to exhort you, and earnestly prayed for you, while he lived, rising up in judgment, and bearing testimony against you, declaring how constantly and laboriously he intreated and called upon you, and how obstinately some of you slighted his counsels; and lest you see him sitting with Christ to judge and condemn you, and adoring his awful justice on your aggravated punishment.

All you that have an interest in Jesus, now go to him on this occasion, and tell him of your bereavement, and beg of him that he would not depart from you; but that he would make up his loss in his own immediate presence. Go to him for your surviving pastor, that he would be with him, and furnish him more and more for, and assist him in, that great work, that is now wholly devolved upon him, and make him also a *burning and shining light* amongst you; and that you

* Particularly, remember his late affectionate farewell at the *table of the Lord*, not expecting such another opportunity with you. Exhorting you to follow *peace and holiness*, and to *edify one another*.

may have of the presence and blessing of JESUS with you, and him.

And now, since I am called to speak in the name of Christ on this solemn occasion, I would apply myself to the near relations of the deceased, who are especially to be looked upon, as the bereaved.

God in his holy Providence has taken from you one that has been a great blessing, comfort and honor to you, and deservedly very dear to you, and honored of you. The doctrine we are upon directs you what to do in your present circumstances, viz. To go to JESUS, to go and spread your affliction before an allsufficient Redeemer.

And particularly I would apply myself to the honored relict, who stood in the nearest relation of any to the deceased, whom God by this awful Providence has made a sorrowful widow. Suffer me, honored madam, in your great affliction, to exhibit to you a compassionate Redeemer. God has now taken from you that servant of his, that was the nearest and best friend you had in this world, that was your wise and prudent guide, your affectionate and pleasant companion, who was so great a blessing while he lived, to you and your family, and under Christ, was so much the comfort and support of your life. You see, madam, where your resort must be: Your earthly friends can condole your loss, but cannot make it up to you; we must all confess ourselves to be but miserable comforters: But you may go and tell Jesus, and there you may have both support and reparation: His love and his presence is far beyond that of the nearest and most affectionate earthly friend. Now you are bereaved of your earthly consort, you may go to a spiritual husband, and seek his compassion and his company: He is the fountain of all that wisdom and prudence, that piety, that tender affection and faithful care, that you enjoyed in your departed consort; in him is an infinite fountain of all these things, and of all good; in him you may have light in your darkness, comfort in your sorrow, and fullness of joy and glory in another world, in an everlasting union with your dear, deceased relative, in the glori-

ous presence of the same *Redeemer, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

This doctrine also directs the bereaved, afflicted children, that are with hearts full of grief, now mourning over a dear departed father, where to go and what to do. You will no longer have your father's wisdom to guide you, his tender love to comfort and delight you, and his affectionate care to guard you and assist you, and his pious and judicious counsels to direct you, and his holy examples set before you, and his fervent, humble, believing prayers with you and for you.

But in the blessed Jesus, your father's Lord and Redeemer, you may have much more, than all those things: Your father's virtues that made him so great a blessing to you, were but the image of what is in Christ.

Therefore go to him in your mourning: Go and tell Jesus; tell a compassionate Saviour what has befallen you. Heretofore you have had an earthly father to go to, whose heart was full of tenderness to you; but the heart of his Redeemer is much more tender; his wisdom and his love is infinitely beyond that of any earthly parent. Go to him, and then you will surely find comfort. Go to him and you will find that, though you are bereaved, yet you are not left in any want, you will find that all your wants are supplied, and all your loss made up, and much more than so.

But here I would particularly, in humility address myself to my honored fathers, the sons of the deceased, that are improved in the same great work of the gospel ministry, or in other public business for the service of their generation..... Honored sirs, though it might be more proper for me to come to you for instruction and counsel, than to take it upon me to exhort you, yet as I am one that ought to have a fellow-feeling of your affliction, and to look on myself as a sharer in it, and as you have desired me to speak in the name of Christ, on this occasion, suffer me to mention to you that source of comfort, that infinite fountain of good, one of the larger streams of which, has failed by the death of an earthly father,

even the blessed Jesus. You will doubtless acknowledge it as an instance of his great goodness to you, that you have been the sons of such a Father; being sensible that your reputation and serviceableness in your generation, have been, under Christ, very much owing to the great advantages you have been under, by his instructions, counsels and education. And is it not fit that children that have *learned of such a faithful servant of Christ*, and been brought up at his feet, now he is dead, should do as John the Baptist's disciples did, *go and tell Jesus?* From whom you may receive comfort under your bereavement, and from whom you may receive more of that Spirit that dwelt in him, and greater degrees of those virtues he derived from Christ, to cause you to shine brighter, and to make you still greater blessings in your generation. Now death has veiled and hid from sight, a *Star* that shone with *reflected light*, our text and doctrine leads you to the *Sun*, that hath *light in himself*, and shines with infinite, unfailing brightness. And while you go to Jesus, honored Sirs, on this occasion for yourselves, I humbly desire your requests to him for us the surviving ministers of this county, that he would be with us, now he has taken from us him that was as a father amongst us.

I nextly would address myself to the surviving pastor of this church. We may well look upon you, Reverend Sir, as one in an especial manner concerned in this awful Providence, and that has a large share in the bereavement. You doubtless are sensible what reason you have to bless God for the advantage you have had, in serving in the gospel of Christ, so long as you have done, with the venerable person deceased, as a son with a father, enjoying the benefit of his instructions, counsels and example. And particularly, you will often recollect the affectionate and fatherly counsels he gave you, to diligence and faithfulness in your Lord's work, with encouragement of his protection and assistance to carry you through all difficulties, the last evening of his life. And now, dear Sir, God has taken him from you, as he took Elijah from Elisha, and as he took John the Baptist, the New Testament

Elijah, from his disciples: Therefore now you are directed what to do, viz. *go and tell Jesus;* as those disciples did. You have now a great work devolved upon you; you have him no more, who, while he lived, was as a father to you, to guide and assist you, and take the burthen of your great work from you. Therefore you have no where else to go, but to your great Lord and Master, that has sent you to labor in that part of his vineyard, where his aged, and now departed servant was employed, to seek strength and wisdom, and divine influence and assistance from him, and a double portion of that Spirit, that dwelt in your predecessor.

And lastly, The text I am upon may be of direction to us the surviving ministers of this county, what to do on this sorrowful occasion. God has now taken our father and master from our head: He has removed him that has heretofore under Christ, been very much *our strength* that we have been wont to resort to in difficult cases for instruction and direction, and that used to be amongst us from time to time, in our associations, and that we were wont to behold as the head and ornament of those conventions.* Where else can we now go but to Jesus, the ever living Head of the whole church, and Lord of the whole harvest, the fountain of light, our great Lord and Master that sends all gospel ministers, and on whom they universally depend. Let this awful Providence bring us to look to Christ, to seek more of his presence with us; and that HE would preside as Head in our associations: Let it bring us to a more immediate and entire dependence upon him, for instruction and direction, in all our difficulties.

Let us on this occasion consider what God has done in this county of late years: It was not many years ago that the county was filled with aged ministers, that were our fathers:

* Very worthy of our notice was that his farewell message sent us by one of our beloved brethren (the Rev. Mr. Williams of Springfield) after he returned from such a Meeting, where he also preached.... "I do not expect," said he, "to be with you another Association Meeting: But I give you this advice, Love your Master, love your work, and love one another." How very expressive of his own spirit? Like John the beloved disciple.

But our fathers, where are they?....What a great alteration is made in a little time, in the churches in this part of the land!* How frequent of late have been the warnings of this kind that God has given us to prepare to give up our account! Let us go to Jesus, and seek grace of him that we may be faithful while we live, and that he would assist us in our great work, that when we also are called hence, we may *give up our account with joy and not with grief*, and that hereafter we may meet those our fathers, that have gone before us in the faithful labors of the gospel, and that we may shine forth with them, *as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever.*

* The Rev. Mr. Stoddard, Mr. Taylor Mr. Williams of Deerfield, Mr. Brewer, and lately have died, Mr. Bull of Westfield, and Mr. Devotion of Suffield.

SERMON XXXII.*

True Saints, when absent from the Body, are present with the Lord.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 8.

WE ARE CONFIDENT, I SAY, AND WILLING RATHER TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

THE apostle in this place is giving a reason why he went on with so much boldness and immoveable stedfastness, through such labors, sufferings, and dangers of his life, in the service of his Lord; for which his enemies, the false teachers among the Corinthians, sometimes reproached him as being beside himself, and driven on by a kind of madness. In the latter part of the preceding chapter, the apostle in-

* Preached on the day of the funeral of the Rev. Mr. David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians, from the Honorable Society in Scotland for the propagation of Christian Knowledge, and Pastor of a Church of Christian Indians in Newjersey; who died at Northampton, in New England, October 9, 1747, in the 30th year of his age, and was interred on the 12th following.

forms the Christian Corinthians, that the reason why he did thus, was, that he firmly believed the promises that Christ had made to his faithful servants of a glorious future eternal reward, and knew that these present afflictions were light, and but for a moment, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The same discourse is continued in this chapter; wherein the apostle further insists on the reason he had given of his constancy in suffering, and exposing himself to death in the work of the ministry, even the more happy state he expected after death. And this is the subject of my text; wherein may be observed,

1. The great future privilege, which the apostle hoped for; that of being present with Christ. The words, in the original, properly signify dwelling with Christ; as in the same country or city, or making an home with Christ.

2. When the apostle looked for this privilege, viz. when he should be absent from the body. Not to wait for it till the resurrection, when soul and body should be united again. He signifies the same thing in his epistle to the Philippians, chap. i. 22, 23. "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor. Yet what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait between two; having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ."

3. The value the apostle set on this privilege. It was such, that for the sake of it, he chose to be absent from the body. He was willing rather, or (as the word properly signifies) it were more pleasing to him, to part with the present life, and all its enjoyments, and be possessed of this great benefit, than to continue here.

4. The present benefit, which the apostle had by his faith and hope of this future privilege, and of his great value for it, viz. that hence he received courage, assurance, and constancy of mind, agreeable to the proper import of the word that is rendered, we are confident. The apostle is now giving a reason of that fortitude and immoveable stability of mind, with which he went through those extreme labors, hardships and dangers, which he mentions in this discourse; so that, in

the midst of all, he did not faint, was not discouraged, but had constant light, and inward support, strength, and comfort in the midst of all: Agreeable to the 10th verse of the foregoing chapter, "For which cause, we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." And the same is expressed more particularly in the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses of that chapter, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." And in the next chapter, ver. 4....10, "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: As deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Among the many useful observations there might be raised from the text, I shall at this time only insist on that which lies most plainly before us in the words, viz. This,

The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ.

Departed souls of saints go to be with Christ, in the following respects:

I. They go to dwell in the same blessed abode with the glorified human nature of Christ.

The human nature of Christ is yet in being. He still continues, and will continue to all eternity, to be both God and man. His whole human nature remains: Not only his human soul, but also his human body. His dead body rose from the dead; and the same that was raised from the dead, is exalted and glorified at God's right hand; that which was dead is now alive, and lives for evermore.

And therefore there is a certain place, a particular part of the external creation, to which Christ is gone, and where he remains. And this place is that which we call the highest heaven, or the heaven of heavens; a place beyond all the visible heavens. Eph. iv. 9, 10. "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." This is the same which the apostle calls the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 2, reckoning the aerial heaven as the first, the starry heaven as the second, and the highest heaven as the third. This is the abode of the holy angels: They are called "the angels of heaven," Matth. xxiv. 36. "The angels which are in heaven," Mark xiii. 32. "The angels of God in heaven," Matth. xxii. 30, and Mark xii. 25. They are said "always to behold the face of the Father which is in heaven," Matth. xviii. 10. And they are elsewhere often represented as before the throne of God, or surrounding his throne in heaven, and sent from thence, and descending from thence on messages to this world. And thither it is that the souls of departed saints are conducted, when they die. They are not reserved in some abode distinct from the highest heaven; a place of rest, which they are kept in, till the day of judgment; such as some imagine, which they call the hades of the happy: But they go directly to heaven itself. This is the saints' home, being their Father's house: They are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and this is the other and better country that they are travelling to: Heb. xi. 13....16. This is the city they belong to; Philip. iii. 20. "Our conversation, or (as the word properly signifies) citizenship, is in heaven." Therefore this undoubtedly is the place the apos-

tle has respect to in my text, when he says, "We are willing to forsake our former house, the body, and to dwell in the same house, city or country, wherein Christ dwells;" which is the proper import of the words of the original. What can this house, or city, or country be, but that house, which is elsewhere spoken of, as their proper home, and their Father's house, and the city and country to which they properly belong, and whither they are travelling all the while they continue in this world, and the house, city, and country where we know the human nature of Christ is? This is the saints' rest; here their hearts are while they live; and here their treasure is: "The inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, that is designed for them, is reserved in heaven;" 1 Pet. i. 4, and therefore they never can have their proper and full rest till they come here. So that undoubtedly their souls, when absent from their bodies (when the scriptures represent them as in a state of perfect rest) arrive hither. Those two saints, that left this world, to go to their rest in another world, without dying, viz. Enoch and Elijah, went to heaven. Elijah was seen ascending up to heaven, as Christ was. And to the same resting place, is there all reason to think, that those saints go, that leave the world, to go to their rest, by death. Moses, when he died in the top of the Mount, ascended to the same glorious abode with Elias, who ascended without dying. They are companions in another world; as they appeared together at Christ's transfiguration. They were together at that time with Christ in the Mount, when there was a specimen or sample of his glorification in heaven. And doubtless they were also together afterwards, with him, when he was, actually, fully glorified in heaven. And thither undoubtedly it was, that the soul of Stephen ascended, when he expired. The circumstances of his death demonstrate it, as we have an account of it, Acts vii. 55, &c. "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man (i. e. Jesus, in his human nature) standing on the right

hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Before his death he had an extraordinary view of the glory that his Saviour had received in heaven, not only for himself, but for him, and all his faithful followers; that he might be encouraged, by the hopes of this glory, cheerfully to lay down his life for his sake. Accordingly he dies in the hope of this, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." By which doubtless he meant, "receive my spirit to be with thee, in that glory, wherein I have now seen thee, in heaven, at the right hand of God." And thither it was that the soul of the penitent thief on the cross ascended. Christ said to him, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise is the same with the third heaven; as appears by 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4. There that which is called the third heaven in the 2d verse, in the 4th verse is called paradise. The departed souls of the apostles and prophets are in heaven; as is manifest from Rev. xviii. 20. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets."

The church of God is distinguished in scripture, from time to time, into these two parts; that part of it that is in heaven, and that which is in earth; Eph. iii. 14, 15. "Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Col. i. 20. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Now what things in heaven are they for whom peace has been made by the blood of Christ's cross, and who have by him been reconciled to God, but the saints in heaven? In like manner we read, Eph. i. 10, of "God's gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." The spirits of just men made perfect are in the same city of the living God, and heavenly Jerusalem, with the innumerable company of angels, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; as is man-

ifest by Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. The church of God is often in scripture called by the name Jerusalem; and the apostle speaks of the Jerusalem which is above, or which is in heaven, as the mother of us all; but if no part of the church be in heaven, or none but Enoch and Elias, it is not likely that the church would be called the Jerusalem which is in heaven.

II. The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ, as they go to dwell in the immediate, full and constant sight or view of him.

When we are absent from our dear friends, they are out of sight; but when we are with them, we have the opportunity and satisfaction of seeing them. So while the saints are in the body, and are absent from the Lord, HE is in several respects out of sight, 1 Pet. i. 8. "Whom having not seen, ye love: In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing," &c. They have indeed, in this world, a spiritual sight of Christ; but they see through a glass darkly, and with great interruption; but in heaven, they see him face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "The pure in heart are blessed; for they shall see God," Matth. v. 8. Their beatifical vision of God is in Christ, who is that brightness or effulgence of God's glory, by which his glory shines forth in heaven, to the view of saints and angels there, as well as here on earth. This is the sun of righteousness, that is not only the light of this world, but is also the sun that enlightens the heavenly Jerusalem; by whose bright beams it is that the glory of God shines forth there, to the enlightening and making happy all the glorious inhabitants. "The Lamb is the light thereof; and so the glory of God doth lighten it," Rev. xxi. 23. None sees God the Father immediately, who is the King eternal, immortal, invisible: Christ is the image of that invisible God, by which he is seen by all elect creatures. The only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him, and manifested him. None has ever immediately seen the Father, but the Son; and none else sees the Father any other way, than by the Son's revealing him. And in heaven, the spirits of just

men made perfect do see him as he is. They behold his glory. They see the glory of his divine nature, consisting in all the glory of the godhead, the beauty of all his perfections; his great majesty, almighty power, his infinite wisdom, holiness, and grace, and they see the beauty of his glorified human nature, and the glory which the Father hath given him, as Godman and Mediator. For this end, Christ desired that his saints might "be with him, that they might behold his glory," John xvii. 24. And when the souls of the saints leave their bodies, to go to be with Christ, they behold the marvellous glory of that great work of his, the work of redemption, and of the glorious way of salvation by him; which the angels desire to look into. They have a most clear view of the unfathomable depths of the manifold wisdom and knowledge of God; and the most bright displays of the infinite purity and holiness of God, that do appear in that way and work; and see in a much clearer manner than the saints do here, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height of the grace and love of Christ, appearing in his redemption. And as they see the unspeakable riches and glory of the attribute of God's grace, so they most clearly behold and understand Christ's eternal and unmeasurable dying love to them in particular. And in short, they see every thing in Christ that tends to kindle and inflame love, and every thing that tends to gratify love, and every thing that tends to satisfy them: And that in the most clear and glorious manner, without any darkness or delusion, without any impediment or interruption. Now the saints, while in the body, see something of Christ's glory and love; as we, in the dawning of the morning, see something of the reflected light of the sun mingled with darkness; but when separated from the body, they see their glorious and loving Redeemer, as we see the sun when risen, and shewing his whole disk above the horizon, by his direct beams, in a clear hemisphere, and with perfect day.

III. The souls of true saints, when absent from the body, go to be with Jesus Christ, as they are brought into a most

perfect conformity to, and union with him. Their spiritual conformity is begun while they are in the body; here beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image; but when they come to see him as he is, in heaven, then they become like him in another manner. That perfect sight will abolish all remains of deformity, disagreement, and sinful unlikeness; as all darkness is abolished before the full blaze of the sun's meridian light: It is impossible that the least degree of obscurity should remain before such light; so it is impossible the least degree of sin and spiritual deformity should remain, in such a view of the spiritual beauty and glory of Christ, as the saints enjoy in heaven, when they see that sun of righteousness without a cloud, they themselves shine forth as the sun, and shall be as little suns, without a spot. For then is come the time when Christ presents his saints to himself, in glorious beauty; "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" and having holiness without a blemish. And then the saints' union with Christ is perfected. This also is begun in this world. The relative union is both begun and perfected at once, when the soul first closes with Christ by faith: The real union, consisting in the union of hearts and affections, and in the vital union, is begun in this world and perfected in the next. The union of the heart of a believer to Christ, is begun when his heart is drawn to Christ, by the first discovery of divine excellency, at conversion; and consequent on this drawing and closing of his heart with Christ, is established a vital union with Christ; whereby the believer becomes a living branch of the true vine, living by a communication of the sap and vital juice of the stock and root; and a member of Christ's mystical body, living by a communication of spiritual and vital influences from the head, and by a kind of participation of Christ's own life. But while the saints are in the body, there is much remaining distance between Christ and them: There are remainders of alienation, and the vital union is very imperfect; and so consequently is the communication of spiritual life and vital influences: There is much between Christ and believers to keep

them asunder, much indwelling sin, much temptation, a world of carnal objects, to keep off the soul from Christ, and hinder a perfect coalescence. But when the soul leaves the body, all these clogs and hindrances shall be removed, every separating wall shall be broken down, and every impediment taken out of the way, and all distance shall cease; the heart shall be wholly and perfectly drawn, and most firmly and for ever attached and bound to him, by a perfect view of his glory. And the vital union shall then be brought to pefection; the soul shall live perfectly in and upon Christ, being perfectly filled with his spirit, and animated by his vital influences; living as it were, only by Christ's life, without any remainder of spiritual death, or carnal life.

IV. Departed souls of saints are with Christ, as they enjoy a glorious and immediate intercourse and converse with him.

While we are present with our friends, we have opportunity for that free and immediate conversation with them, which we cannot have in absence from them. And therefore, by reason of the vastly more free, perfect, and immediate intercourse with Christ, which the saints enjoy when absent from the body, they are fitly represented as present with him.

The most intimate intercourse becomes that relation that the saints stand in to Jesus Christ; and especially becomes that most perfect and glorious union they shall be brought into with him in heaven. They are not merely Christ's servants, but his friends. John xv. 15. His brethren and companions; Psalm cxxii. 8; "yea, they are the spouse of Christ." They are espoused or betrothed to Christ while in the body; but when they go to heaven, they enter into the king's palace, their mariage with him is come, and the king brings them into his chambers indeed. They then go to dwell with Christ constantly, to enjoy the most perfect converse with him. Christ conversed in the most friendly manner with his disciples on earth; he admitted one of them to lean on his bosom: But they are admitted much more fully and

freely to converse with him in heaven Though Christ be there in a state of glorious exaltation, reigning in the majesty and glory of the sovereign Lord and God of heaven and earth, angels and men ; yet this will not hinder intimacy and freedom of intercourse, but rather promote it. For he is thus exalted, not only for himself, but for them ; he is instated in this glory of head over all things for their sakes, that they might be exalted and glorified ; and when they go to heaven where he is, they are exalted and glorified with him ; and shall not be kept at a more awful distance from Christ, but shall be admitted nearer, and to a greater intimacy. For they shall be unspeakably more fit for it, and Christ in more fit circumstances to bestow on them this blessedness. Their seeing the great glory of their friend and Redeemer, will not awe them to a distance, and make them afraid of a near approach ; but on the contrary, will most powerfully draw them near, and encourage and engage them to holy freedom. For they will know that it is he that is their own Redeemer, and beloved friend and bridegroom ; the very same that loved them with a dying love, and redeemed them to God by his blood ; Matth. xiv. 27. " It is I ; be not afraid." Rev. i. 17, 18. " Fear not : ....I am he that liveth, and was dead." And the nature of this glory of Christ that they shall see, will be such as will draw and encourage them ; for they will not only see infinite majesty and greatness, but infinite grace, condescension, and mildness, and gentleness and sweetness, equal to his majesty. For he appears in heaven, not only as " the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but as the Lamb, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne." Rev. v. 5, 6 ; and this Lamb in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, to " feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water," Rev. vii. 17 ; so that the sight of Christ's great kingly majesty will be no terror to them ; but will only serve the more to heighten their pleasure and surprise. When Mary was about to embrace Christ, being full of joy at the sight of him again alive after his crucifixion, Christ forbids her to do it for the present ; because he was not yet ascended, John xx. 16, 17. " Jesus saith unto her,

Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, touch me not: For I am not yet ascended to my Father: But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God." As if he had said, "This is not the time and place for that freedom your love to me desires: That is appointed in heaven after my ascension. I am going thither; and you that are my true disciples, shall, as my brethren and companions, soon be there with me in my glory. And then there shall be no restraint. That is the place appointed for the most perfect expressions of complacence and endearment, and full enjoyment of mutual love." And accordingly the souls of departed saints with Christ in heaven, shall have Christ as it were unbosomed unto them, manifesting those infinite riches of love towards them, that have been there from eternity; and they shall be enabled to express their love to him, in an infinitely better manner than ever they could while in the body. Thus they shall eat and drink abundantly, and swim in the ocean of love, and be eternally swallowed up in the infinitely bright, and infinitely mild and sweet beams of divine love; eternally receiving that light, eternally full of it, and eternally compassed round with it, and everlastingly reflecting it back again to the fountain of it.

V. The souls of the saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ, as they are received to a glorious fellowship with Christ in his blessedness.

As the wife is received to a joint possession of her husband's estate, and as the wife of a prince partakes with him in his princely possessions and honors; so the church, the spouse of Christ, when the marriage comes, and she is received to dwell with him in heaven, shall partake with him in his glory. When Christ rose from the dead, and took possession of eternal life; this was not as a private person, but as the public head of all his redeemed people. He took possession of it for them, as well as for himself; and "they are quickened together with him, and raised up together." And so when

he ascended into heaven, and was exalted to great glory there, this also was as a public person: He took possession of heaven, not only for himself, but his people, as their forerunner and head, that they might ascend also, "and sit together in heavenly places with him," Eph. ii. 5, 6. "Christ writes upon them his new name," Rev. iii. 12. i. e. He makes them partakers of his own glory and exaltation in heaven. His new name is that new honor and glory that the Father invested him with, when he set him on his own right hand: As a prince, when he advances any one to new dignity in his kingdom, gives him a new title. Christ and his saints shall be glorified together, Rom. viii. 17.

The saints in heaven have communion, or a joint participation with Christ in his glory and blessedness in heaven, in the following respects more especially.

1. They partake with him in the ineffable delights he has in heaven, in the enjoyment of his Father.

When Christ ascended into heaven, he was received to a glorious and peculiar joy and blessedness in the enjoyment of his Father, who, in his passion, hid his face from him; such an enjoyment as became the relation he stood in to the Father, and such as was a meet reward for the great and hard service he had performed on earth. Then "God shewed him the path of life, and brought him into his presence, where is fulness of joy, and to sit on his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore," as is said of Christ, Psalm xvi. 11. Then the Father "made him most blessed for ever: He made him exceeding glad with his countenance;" as in Psalm xxi. 6. The saints, by virtue of their union with Christ, and being his members, do, in some sort partake of his childlike relation to the Father; and so are heirs with him of his happiness in the enjoyment of his Father; as seems to be intimated by the apostle, in Gal. iv. 4.....7. The spouse of Christ, by virtue of her espousals to that only begotten Son of God, is, as it were, a partaker of his filial relation to God, and becomes the king's daughter, Psalm xlv. 13, and so partakes with her divine husband in his enjoyment of his Father and her Father, his God

and her God." A promise of this seems to be implied in those words of Christ to Mary, John xx. 17. Thus Christ's faithful servants "enter into the joy of their Lord," Matth xxv. 21, 23; and "Christ's joy remains in them;" agreeably to those words of Christ, John xv. 11. Christ from eternity is, as it were, in the bosom of the Father, as the object of his infinite complacence. In him is the Father's eternal happiness. Before the world was, he was with the Father, in the enjoyment of his infinite love; and had infinite delight and blessedness in that enjoyment; as he declares of himself in Prov. viii. 30. "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." And when Christ ascended to the Father after his passion, he went to him, to the enjoyment of the same glory and blessedness in the enjoyment of his love; agreeably to his prayer the evening before his crucifixion, John xvii. 5. "And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was." And in the same prayer, he manifests it to be his will, that his true disciples should be with him in the enjoyment of that joy and glory, which he then asked for himself; verse 13. "That my joy might be fulfilled in themselves;" verse 22. "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." This glory of Christ, which the saints are to enjoy with him, is that which he has in the enjoyment of the Father's infinite love to him; as appears by the last words of that prayer of our Lord, verse 26. "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." The love which the Father has to his Son is great indeed; the Deity does, as it were, wholly and entirely flow out in a stream of love to Christ; and the joy and pleasure of Christ is proportionably great. This is the stream of Christ's delights, the river of his infinite pleasure; which he will make his saints to drink of with him, agreeably to Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: In thy light shall we see light." The saints shall have pleasure in partak-

ing with Christ in his pleasure, and shall see light in his light. They shall partake with Christ of the same river of pleasure, shall drink of the same water of life, and of the same new wine in Christ's Father's kingdom ; Matth. xxvi. 29. That new wine is especially that joy and happiness that Christ and his true disciples shall partake of together in glory, which is the purchase of Christ's blood, or the reward of his obedience unto death. Christ, at his ascension into heaven, received everlasting pleasures at his Father's right hand, and in the enjoyment of his Father's love, as the reward of his own death, or obedience unto death. But the same righteousness is reckoned to both head and members ; and both shall have fellowship in the same reward, each according to their distinct capacity.

That the saints in heaven have such a communion with Christ in his joy, and do so partake with him in his own enjoyment of the Father, does greatly manifest the transcendent excellency of their happiness, and their being admitted to a vastly higher privilege in glory than the angels.

2. The saints in heaven are received to a fellowship or participation with Christ in the glory of that dominion to which the Father hath exalted him.

The saints, when they ascend to heaven as Christ ascended, and are made to sit together with him in heavenly places, and are partakers of the glory of his exaltation, are exalted to reign with him. They are through him made kings and priests, and reign with him, and in him, over the same kingdom. As the Father hath appointed unto him a kingdom, so he has appointed to them. The Father has appointed the Son to reign over his own kingdom, and the Son appoints his saints to reign in his. The Father has given to Christ to sit with him on his throne, and Christ gives to the saints to sit with him on his throne, agreeably to Christ's promise, Rev. iii. 21. Christ, as God's Son, is the heir of his kingdom, and the saints are joint heirs with Christ ; which implies, that they are heirs of the same inheritance, to possess the same kingdom, in and with him, according to their capacity. Christ, in

his kingdom, reigns over heaven and earth; he is appointed the heir of all things; and so all things are the saints'; "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," all are theirs; because they are Christ's, and united to him, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. The angels are given to Christ as a part of his dominion; they are all given to wait upon him as ministering spirits to him: So also they are all, even the highest and most dignified of them, ministering spirits, to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation. They are Christ's angels, and they are also their angels. Such is the saints' union with Christ, and their interest in him, that what he possesses, they possess, in a much more perfect and blessed manner than if all things were given to them separately, and by themselves, to be disposed of according to their discretion. They are now disposed of so as, in every respect, to be most for their blessedness, by an infinitely better discretion than their own; and in being disposed of by their head and husband, between whom and them there is the most perfect union of hearts, and so the most perfect union of wills, and who are most perfectly each other's.

As the glorified spouse of this great King reigns with and in him, in his dominion over the universe, so more especially does she partake with him in the joy and glory of his reign in his kingdom of grace; which is more peculiarly the kingdom that he possesses as head of the church, and is that kingdom wherein she is more especially interested. It was especially to reign in this kingdom, that God the Father exalted him to his throne in heaven: He set his King on his holy hill of Zion, especially that he might reign over Zion, or over his church, in his kingdom of grace; and that he might be under the best advantages to carry on the designs of his love in this lower world. And therefore undoubtedly the saints in heaven are partakers with Christ in the joy and glory of the advancement and prosperity of his kingdom of grace on earth, and success of his gospel here, which he looks on as the peculiar glory of his reign.

The good shepherd rejoices when he finds but one sheep that was lost; and his friends and neighbors in heaven rejoice with him on that occasion. That part of the family that is in heaven is surely not unacquainted with the affairs of that part of the same family that is on earth. They that are with the King and are next to him, the royal family, that dwell in his palace, are not kept in ignorance of the affairs of his kingdom. The saints in heaven are with the angels, the King's ministers, by which he manages the affairs of his kingdom, and who are continually ascending and descending from heaven to the earth, and one or other of them daily employed as ministering spirits to each individual member of the church below: Besides the continual ascending of the souls of departed saints from all parts of the militant church. On these accounts the saints in heaven must needs be under a thousand times greater advantage than we here, for a full view of the state of the church on earth, and a speedy, direct, and certain acquaintance with all its affairs in every part. And that which gives them much greater advantage for such an acquaintance than the things already mentioned, is their being constantly in the immediate presence of Christ, and in the enjoyment of the most perfect intercourse with him, who is the King who manages all these affairs, and has an absolutely perfect knowledge of them. Christ is the head of the whole glorified assembly; they are mystically his glorified body: And what the head sees, it sees for the information of the whole body, according to its capacity: And what the head enjoys, is for the joy of the whole body.

The saints, in leaving this world, and ascending to heaven, do not go out of sight of things appertaining to Christ's kingdom on earth; but, on the contrary, they go out of a state of obscurity, and ascend above the mists and clouds into the clearest light; to a pinnacle, in the very centre of light, where every thing appears in clear view. They have as much greater advantage to view the state of Christ's kingdom, and the works of the new creation here, than while they were in this world, as a man that ascends to the top of an high moun-

tain has greater advantage to view the face of the earth, than he had while he was in a deep valley, or thick forest below, surrounded on every side with those things that impeded and limited his sight. Nor do they view as indifferent or unconcerned spectators, any more than Christ himself is an unconcerned spectator.

The happiness of the saints in heaven consists very much in beholding the glory of God appearing in the work of redemption: For it is by this chiefly that God manifests his glory, the glory of his wisdom, holiness, grace, and other perfections, to both saints and angels; as is apparent by many scriptures. And therefore undoubtedly their happiness consists very much in beholding the progress of this work in its application and success, and the steps by which infinite power and wisdom bring it to its consummation. And the saints in heaven are under unspeakably greater advantage to take the pleasure of beholding the progress of this work on earth than we are that are here; as they are under greater advantages to see and understand the marvellous steps that Divine Wisdom takes in all that is done, and the glorious ends he obtains, the opposition Satan makes, and how he is baffled and overthrown. They can better see the connexion of one event with another, and the beautiful order of all things that come to pass in the church in different ages that to us appear like confusion. Nor do they only view these things, and rejoice in them, as a glorious and beautiful sight, but as persons interested, as Christ is interested; as possessing these things in Christ, and reigning with him, in this kingdom. Christ's success in his work of redemption, in bringing home souls to himself, applying his saving benefits by his Spirit, and the advancement of the kingdom of grace in the world, is the reward especially promised to him by his Father in the covenant of redemption, for the hard and difficult service he performed while in the form of a servant; as is manifest by Isai. liii. 10, 11, 12. But the saints shall be rewarded with him: They shall partake with him in the joy of this reward; for this obedience that is thus rewarded is reckoned to them as they are

his members, as was before observed. This was especially the joy that was set before Christ, for the sake of which he endured the cross and despised the shame. And his joy is the joy of all heaven. They that are with him in heaven are under much the greatest advantages to partake with him in this joy; for they have a perfect communion with him through whom, and in fellowship with whom, they enjoy and possess their whole inheritance, all their heavenly happiness; as much as the whole body has all its pleasure of music by the ear, and all the pleasure of its food by the mouth and stomach; and all the benefit and refreshment of the air by the lungs. The saints while on earth pray and labor for the same thing that Christ labored for, viz. the advancement of the kingdom of God among men, the promoting the prosperity of Zion, and flourishing of religion in this world; and most of them have suffered for that end as Christ did, have been made partakers with their head in his sufferings, and "filled up (as the apostle expresses it) that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ:" And therefore they shall partake with him of the glory and joy of the end obtained; Rom. viii. 17. "We are joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." 2 Tim. ii. 12. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Christ, when his sufferings were past, and he left the earth and ascended into heaven, was so far from having done with his kingdom in this world, that it was as it were but then begun: And he ascended for that very end, that he might more fully possess and enjoy this kingdom, that he might reign in it, and be under the best advantages for it; as much as a king ascends a throne in order to reign over his people, and receive the honor and glory of his dominion. No more have the saints done with Christ's kingdom on earth, when they leave the earth and ascend into heaven. "Christ came (i. e. ascended) with clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and was brought near before him, to the very end, that he might receive dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him," Dan. vii. 13, 14.

Which shall be eminently fulfilled after the ruin of Antichrist, which is especially the time of Christ's kingdom. And the same is the time when "the kingdom, and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High God;" as verse 27, in the same chapter. It is because they shall reign in and with Christ, the Most High, as seems intimated in the words that follow; "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." This verse is true, not only of the saints on earth, but also the saints in heaven. Hence the saints in heaven, having respect to this time, do sing, in Rev. v. 10. "We shall reign on the earth." And agreeably hereto, it is afterwards represented, that when the forementioned time comes, the souls of them that in former ages had suffered with Christ do reign with Christ; having as it were given to them new life and joy, in that spiritual blessed resurrection, which shall then be of the church of God on earth; and thus it is that it is said, Matth. v. 5. "The meek (those that meekly and patiently suffer with Christ, and for his sake) shall inherit the earth:" They shall inherit it, and reign on earth with Christ. Christ is the heir of the world; and when the appointed time of his kingdom comes, his inheritance shall be given him, and then the meek, who are joint heirs, shall inherit the earth. The place in the Old Testament whence the words are taken, leads to a true interpretation of them. Psal. xxxvii. 11. "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." That there is reference in these latter words, "The abundance of peace," to the peace and blessedness of the latter days, we may be satisfied by comparing these words with Psal. lxxii. 7. "In his days shall be abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth:" And Jer. xxxiii. 6. "I will reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth:" Also Isai. ii. 4....Micah iv. 3....Isai. xi. 6....9; and many other parallel places. The saints in heaven will be as much with Christ in reigning over the nations, and in the glory of his dominion at that time, as they will be with him in the honor of judging

the world at the last day. That promise of Christ to his disciples, Matth. xix. 28, 29, seems to have a special respect to the former of these. In verse 28, Christ promises to the disciples, that hereafter, "when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" The saints in heaven reigning on earth in the glorious latter day, is described in language accommodated to this promise of Christ, Rev. xx. 4. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them; and judgment was given them. And they reigned with Christ." And the promise in the next verse, in that xixth of Matthew, seems to have its fulfilment at the same time: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life;" i. e. in the time when the saints shall inherit the earth and reign on earth, the earth, with all its blessings and good things, shall be given in great abundance to the church, to be possessed by the saints. This shall they receive in this present world, and in the time to come everlasting life. The saints in heaven shall partake with Christ in the triumph and glory of those victories that he shall obtain in that future glorious time, over the kings and nations of the world, that are sometimes represented by his ruling them with a rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Which doubtless there is respect to in Rev. ii. 26, 27. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers) even as I received of my Father." And Psal. cxlix. 5, to the end: "Let the saints be joyful in glory: Let them sing aloud upon their beds (i. e. in their separate state after death; compare Isai. lvii. 1, 2.) Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the Heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute upon them the judgment written: This

honor have all the saints." Accordingly when Christ appears riding forth to his victory over Antichrist, Rev. xix, the hosts of heaven appear going forth with him in robes of triumph, verse 14. And when Antichrist is destroyed, the inhabitants of heaven, and the holy apostles and prophets, are called upon to rejoice, chap. xviii. 20. And accordingly the whole multitude of the inhabitants of heaven, on that occasion, do appear to exult and praise God with exceeding joy; chap. xix. 1.....8, and chap. xi. 15: And are also represented as greatly rejoicing on occasion of the ruin of the heathen empire, in the days of Constantine; chap. xii. 10.

And it is observable all along in the visions of that book, the hosts of heaven appear as much concerned and interested in the events appertaining to the kingdom of Christ here below, as the saints on earth. The day of the commencement of the church's latter day glory is eminently "the day of Christ's espousals; the day of the gladness of his heart, when, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so he will rejoice over his church," And then will all heaven exceedingly rejoice with him. And therefore they say at that time, Rev. xix. 7. "Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give glory to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come."

Thus Abraham enjoys these things, when they come to pass, that were of old promised to him, and that he saw before hand, and rejoiced in. He will enjoy the fulfilment of the promise of all the families of the earth being blessed in his seed, when it shall be accomplished. And all the ancient patriarchs, who died in faith of promises of glorious things that should be accomplished in this world, "who had not received the promises, but saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them," do actually enjoy them when fulfilled. David actually saw and enjoyed the fulfilment of that promise, in its due time, which was made to him many hundred years before, and was all his salvation and all his desire. Thus Daniel shall stand in his lot at the end of the days pointed out by his own prophecy. Thus the saints of old that died in faith, not having received the promises, are made perfect,

and have their faith crowned by the better things accomplished in these latter days of the gospel, Heb. xi. 39, 40, which they see and enjoy in their time.

3. The departed souls of saints have fellowship with Christ, in his blessed and eternal employment of glorifying the Father.

The happiness of heaven consists not only in contemplation, and a mere passive enjoyment, but consists very much in action. And particularly in actively serving and glorifying God. This is expressly mentioned as a great part of the blessedness of the saints in their most perfect state, Rev. xxii. 3. "And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." The angels are as a flame of fire in their ardor and activity in God's service: The four animals, Rev. iv. (which are generally supposed to signify the angels) are represented as continually giving praise and glory to God, and are said not to rest day nor night, verse 8. The souls of departed saints are, doubtless, become as the angels of God in heaven in this respect. And Jesus Christ is the head of the whole glorious assembly; as in other things appertaining to their blessed state, so in this of their praising and glorifying the Father. When Christ, the night before he was crucified, prayed for his exaltation to glory, it was that he might glorify the Father; John xvii. 1. "These words spake Jesus, and lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." And this he doubtless does, now he is in heaven; not only in fulfilling the Father's will, in what he does as head of the church and ruler of the universe, but also in leading the heavenly assembly in their praises. When Christ instituted the Supper, and ate and drank with his disciples at his table (giving them therein a representation and pledge of their future feasting with him, and drinking new wine in his heavenly Father's kingdom) he at that time led them in their praises to God, in that hymn that they sang. And so doubtless he leads his glorified disciples in heaven. David was the sweet psalmist of Is-

rael, and led the great congregation of God's people in their songs of praise. Herein, as well as in innumerable other things, he was a type of Christ, who is often spoken of in Scripture by the name of David. And many of the psalms that David penned, were songs of praise, that he, by the spirit of prophecy, uttered in the name of Christ, as head of the church, and leading the saints in their praises. Christ in heaven leads the glorious assembly in their praises to God, as Moses did the congregation of Israel at the Red Sea; which is implied in its being said, that "they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb," Rev. xv. 2, 3. In Rev. xix. 5. John tells us, that "he heard a voice come out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." Who can it be that utters this voice out of the throne, but the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, calling on the glorious assembly of saints to praise his Father and their Father, his God and their God? And what the consequence of this voice is, we have an account in the next words: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

APPLICATION.

The use that I would make of what has been said on this subject is of EXHORTATION. Let us all be exhorted hence earnestly to seek after that great privilege that has been spoken of, that when "we are absent from the body, we may be present with the Lord." We cannot continue always in these earthly tabernacles: They are very frail, and will soon decay and fall; and are continually liable to be overthrown by innumerable means: Our souls must soon leave them, and go into the eternal world. O, how infinitely great will the privilege and happiness of such be, who at that time shall go to be with Christ in his glory, in the manner that has been repre-

sented! The privilege of the twelve disciples was great, in being so constantly with Christ as his family, in his state of humiliation. The privilege of those three disciples was great, who were with him in the mount of his transfiguration; where was exhibited to them some little semblance of his future glory in heaven, such as they might behold in the present frail, feeble, and sinful state: They were greatly entertained and delighted with what they saw; and were for making tabernacles to dwell there, and return no more down the mount. And great was the privilege of Moses when he was with Christ in Mount Sinai, and besought him to shew him his glory, and he saw his back parts as he passed by, and proclaimed his name. But is not that privilege infinitely greater, that has now been spoken of, the privilege of being with Christ in heaven, where he sits on the right hand of God, in the glory of the King and God of angels, and of the whole universe, shining forth as the great light, the bright sun of that world of glory; there to dwell in the full, constant, and everlasting view of his beauty and brightness; there most freely and intimately to converse with him, and fully to enjoy his love, as his friends and spouse; there to have fellowship with him in the infinite pleasure and joy he has in the enjoyment of his Father; there to sit with him on his throne, and reign with him in the possession of all things, and partake with him in the joy and glory of his victory over his enemies, and the advancement of his kingdom in the world, and to join with him in joyful songs of praise to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God, for ever and ever? Is not such a privilege worth the seeking after?

But here, as a special enforcement of this exhortation, I would improve that dispensation of God's holy Providence, that is the sorrowful occasion of our coming together at this time, viz. the death of that eminent servant of Jesus Christ, in the work of the gospel ministry, whose funeral is this day to be attended; together with what was observable in him, living and dying.

In this dispensation of Providence, God puts us in mind of our mortality, and forewarns us that the time is approaching when we must be absent from the body, and "must all appear (as the apostle observes in the next verse but one to my text) before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one of us may receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad."

And in him, whose death we are now called to consider and improve, we have not only an instance of mortality, but an instance of one that, being absent from the body, is present with the Lord; as we have all imaginable reason to conclude. And that, whether we consider the nature of the operations he was under, about the time whence he dates his conversion, or the nature and course of his inward exercises from that time forward, or his outward conversation and practice in life, or his frame and behavior during the whole of that long space wherein he looked death in the face.

His convictions of sin, preceding his first consolations in Christ (as appears by a written account he has left of his inward exercises and experiences) were exceeding deep and thorough: His trouble and exercise of mind, through a sense of guilt and misery, very great and long continued, but yet sound and solid; consisting in no unsteady, violent and unaccountable hurries and frights, and strange pertubations of mind; but arising from the most serious consideration, and proper illumination of the conscience to discern and consider the true state of things. And the light let into his mind at conversion, and the influences and exercises that his mind was subject to at that time, appear very agreeable to reason and the gospel of Jesus Christ; the change very great and remarkable, without any appearance of strong impressions on the imagination, sudden flights and pangs of the affections, and vehement emotions in animal nature; but attended with proper intellectual views of the supreme glory of the divine Being, consisting in the infinite dignity and beauty of the perfections of his nature, and of the transcendent excellency of the way of salvation by Christ.

This was about eight years ago, when he was about twenty-one years of age.

Thus God sanctified and made meet for his use, that vessel that he intended to make eminently a vessel of honor in his house, and which he had made of large capacity, having endowed him with very uncommon abilities and gifts of nature. He was a singular instance of a ready invention, natural eloquence, easy flowing expression, sprightly apprehension quick discerning, and a very strong memory; and yet of a very penetrating genius, close and clear thought, and piercing judgment. He had an exact tase: His understanding was (if I may so express it) of a quick, strong and distinguishing scent.

His learning was very considerable: He had a great taste for learning; and applied himself to his studies in so close a manner when he was at college, that he much injured his health; and was obliged on that account for a while to leave the college, throw by his studies, and return home. He was esteemed one that excelled in learning in that society.

He had an extraordinary knowledge of men, as well as things. Had a great insight into human nature, and excelled most that ever I knew in a communicative faculty: He had a peculiar talent at accommodating himself to the capacities, tempers and circumstances, of those that he would instruct or counsel.

He had extraordinary gifts for the pulpit: I never had opportunity to hear him preach, but have often heard him pray: And I think his manner of addressing himself to God, and expressing himself before him, in that duty, almost inimitable; such (so far as I may judge) as I have very rarely known equalled. He expressed himself with that exact propriety and pertinency, in such significant, weighty, pungent expressions; with that decent appearance of sincerity, reverence, and solemnity, and great distance from all affectation, as forgetting the presence of men, and as being in the immediate presence of a great and holy God, that I have scarcely ever known paralleled. And his manner of preaching, by

what I have often heard of it from good judges, was no less excellent; being clear and instructive, natural, nervous, forcible, and moving, and very searching and convincing. He nauseated an affected noisiness, and violent boisterousness in the pulpit; and yet much disrelished a flat cold delivery, when the subject of discourse, and matter delivered, required affection and earnestness.

Not only had he excellent talents for the study and the pulpit, but also for conversation. He was of a sociable disposition; and was remarkably free, entertaining, and profitable in his ordinary discourse: And had much of a faculty of disputing, defending truth and confuting error.

As he excelled in his judgment and knowledge of things in general, so especially in divinity. He was truly, for one of his standing, an extraordinary divine. But above all, in matters relating to experimental religion. In this, I know I have the concurring opinion of some that have had a name for persons of the best judgment. And according to what ability I have to judge of things of this nature, and according to my opportunities, which of late have been very great, I never knew his equal, of his age and standing, for clear, accurate notions of the nature and essence of true religion, and its distinctions from its various false appearances; which I suppose to be owing to these three things; meeting together in him, the strength of his natural genius, and the great opportunities he had of observation of others, in various parts, both white people and Indians; and his own great experience.

His experiences of the holy influences of God's Spirit were not only great at his first conversion, but they were so, in a continued course, from that time forward; as appears by a record, or private journal, he kept of his daily inward exercises, from the time of his conversion, until he was disabled by the failing of his strength, a few days before his death. The change which he looked upon as his conversion, was not only a great change of the present views, affections, and frame of his mind; but was evidently the beginning of that work of God on his heart, which God carried on, in a very wonderful

manner, from that time to his dying day. He greatly abhorred the way of such, as live on their first work, as though they had now got through their work, and are thenceforward, by degrees, settled in a cold, lifeless, negligent, worldly frame; he had an ill opinion of such persons' religion.*

Oh that the things that were seen and heard in this extraordinary person, his holiness, heavenlyness, labor and selfdenial in life, his so remarkable devoting himself and his all, in heart and practice, to the glory of God, and the wonderful frame of mind manifested, in so stedfast a manner, under the expectation of death, and the pains and agonies that brought it on, may excite in us all, both ministers and people, a due sense of the greatness of the work we have to do in the world, the excellency and amiableness of thorough religion in experience and practice, and the blessedness of the end of such, whose death finishes such a life, and the infinite value of their eternal reward, when absent from the body and present with the Lord; and effectually stir us up to endeavors that in the way of such an holy life, we may at last come to so blessed an end.....AMEN.

* We have omitted a few pages which follow here of this discourse, because what the author communicates, respecting Mr. Brainerd, is to be found almost in the same words in the Memoirs of his life, and in his Reflections upon it, which he afterwards published, and which the reader will find in the third volume of this work.

SERMON XXXIII.*

God's awful Judgment in the breaking and withering of the Strong Rods of Community.

EZEKIEL xix. 12.

HER STRONG RODS WERE BROKEN AND WITHERED.

IN order to a right understanding and improving these words, these four things must be observed and understood concerning them.

1. Who she is that is here represented as having had strong rods, viz. the Jewish community, who here, as often elsewhere, is called the people's mother. She is here compared to a vine planted in a very fruitful soil, verse 10. The Jewish church and state is often elsewhere compared to a vine; as Psalm lxxx. 8, &c. Isai. v. 2. Jer. ii. 21. Ezek. xv. and chapter xvii. 6.

* Preached at Northampton on the Lord's day, June 26, 1748, on the death of the Hon. John Stoddard, Esq. often a member of his Majesty's council, for many years chief justice of the court of Common pleas for the county of Hampshire, judge of the probate of wills, and chief colonel of the regiment, &c. who died at Boston, June 19, 1748, in the 67th year of his age.

2. What is meant by her strong rods, viz. her wise, able, and well qualified magistrates or rulers. That the rulers or magistrates are intended is manifest by verse 11. "And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bear rule." And by rods that were strong, must be meant such rulers as were well qualified for magistracy, such as had great abilities and other qualifications fitting them for the business of rule. They were wont to choose a rod or staff of the strongest and hardest sort of wood that could be found, for the mace or sceptre of a prince; such an one only being counted fit for such an use; and this generally was overlaid with gold.

It is very remarkable that such a strong rod should grow out of a weak vine; but so it had been in Israel, through God's extraordinary blessing, in times past. Though the nation is spoken of here, and frequently elsewhere, as weak and helpless in itself, and entirely dependent as a vine, that is the weakest of all trees, that cannot support itself by its own strength, and never stands but as it leans on, or hangs by something else that is stronger than itself; yet God had caused many of her sons to be strong rods, fit for sceptres; he had raised up in Israel many able and excellent princes and magistrates in days past, that had done worthily in their day.

3. It should be understood and observed what is meant by these strong rods being broken and withered, viz. these able and excellent rulers being removed by death: Man's dying is often compared in scripture to the withering of the growth of the earth.

4. It should be observed after what manner the breaking and withering of these strong rods is here spoken of, viz. as a great and awful calamity, that God had brought upon that people: It is spoken of as one of the chief effects of God's fury and dreadful displeasure against them: "But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit; her strong rods were broken and withered, the fire hath consumed them." The great benefits she enjoyed while her strong rods remained, are represented in the preceding verse: "And she had strong rods.

for the sceptres of them that bear rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches." And the terrible calamities that attended the breaking and withering of her strong rods, are represented in the two verses next following the text: "And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit. And in the conclusion in the next words, is very emphatically declared the worthiness of such a dispensation to be greatly lamented; "So that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule: This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation."

That which I therefore observe from the words of the text, to be the subject of discourse at this time, is this,

When God by death removes from a people those in place of public authority and rule that have been as strong rods, it is an awful judgment of God on that people, and worthy of great lamentation.

In discoursing on this proposition, I would,

I. Shew what kind of rulers may fitly be called strong rods.

II. Shew why the removal of such rulers from a people, by death, is to be looked upon as an awful judgment of God on that people, and is greatly to be lamented.

I. I would observe what qualifications of those who are in public authority and rule may properly give them the denomination of strong rods.

1. One qualification of rulers whence they may properly be denominated strong rods, is great ability for the management of public affairs. When they that stand in place of public authority are men of great natural abilities, when they are men of uncommon strength of reason and largeness of understanding; especially when they have remarkably a genius for government, a peculiar turn of mind fitting them to gain an

extraordinary understanding in things of that nature, giving ability, in an especial manner, for insight into the mysteries of government, and discerning those things wherein the public welfare or calamity consists, and the proper means to avoid the one and promote the other; an extraordinary talent at distinguishing what is right and just, from that which is wrong and unequal and to see through the false colors with which injustice is often disguised, and unravel the false subtle arguments and cunning sophistry that is often made use of to defend iniquity; and when they have not only great natural abilities in these respects, but when their abilities and talents have been improved by study, learning, observation and experience; and when by these means they have obtained great actual knowledge; when they have acquired great skill in public affairs, and things requisite to be known, in order to their wise, prudent, and effectual management; when they have obtained a great understanding of men and things, a great knowledge of human nature, and of the way of accommodating themselves to it, so as most effectually to influence it to wise purposes; when they have obtained a very extensive knowledge of men with whom they are concerned in the management of public affairs, either those that have a joint concern in government, or those that are to be governed; and when they have also obtained a very full and particular understanding of the state and circumstances of the country or people that they have the care of, and know well their laws and constitution, and what their circumstances require; and likewise have a great knowledge of the people of neighbor nations, states, or provinces, with whom they have occasion to be concerned in the management of public affairs committed to them; these things all contribute to the rendering those that are in authority fit to be denominated strong rods.

2. When they have not only great understanding, but largeness of heart, and a greatness and nobleness of disposition, this is another qualification that belongs to the character of a strong rod.

Those that are by divine Providence set in place of public authority and rule, are called "gods, and sons of the Most High," Psalm lxxxii. 6. And therefore it is peculiarly unbecoming them to be of a mean spirit, a disposition that will admit of their doing those things that are sordid and vile; as when they are persons of a narrow, private spirit, that may be found in little tricks and intrigues to promote their private interest, will shamefully defile their hands, to gain a few pounds, are not ashamed to nip and bite others, grind the faces of the poor, and screw upon their neighbors; and will take advantage of their authority or commission to line their own pockets with what is fraudulently taken or withheld from others. When a man in authority is of such a mean spirit, it weakens his authority, and makes him justly contemptible in the eyes of men, and is utterly inconsistent with his being a strong rod.

But on the contrary, it greatly establishes his authority, and causes others to stand in awe of him, when they see him to be a man of greatness of mind, one that abhors those things that are mean and sordid, and not capable of a compliance with them; one that is of a public spirit, and not of a private narrow disposition; a man of honor, and not a man of mean artifice and clandestine management, for filthy lucre, and one that abhors trifling and impertinence, or to waste away his time, that should be spent in the service of God, his king, or his country, in vain amusements and diversions, and in the pursuit of the gratifications of sensual appetites; as God charges the rulers in Israel, that pretended to be their great and mighty men, with being mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. There does not seem to be any reference to their being men of strong heads, and able to bear a great deal of strong drink, as some have supposed: There is a severe sarcasm in the words; for the prophet is speaking of the great men, princes, and judges in Israel (as appears by the verse next following) which should be mighty men, strong rods, men of eminent qualifications, excelling in nobleness of spirit, of glorious strength and fortitude of mind;

but instead of that, they were mighty or eminent for nothing but gluttony and drunkenness.

3. When those that are in authority are endowed with much of a spirit of government, this is another thing that entitles them to the denomination of strong rods. When they not only are men of great understanding and wisdom in affairs that appertain to government, but have also a peculiar talent at using their knowledge, and exerting themselves in this great and important business, according to their great understanding in it; when they are men of eminent fortitude, and are not afraid of the faces of men, are not afraid to do the part that properly belongs to them as rulers, though they meet with great opposition, and the spirits of men are greatly irritated by it; When they have a spirit of resolution and activity, so as to keep the wheels of government in proper motion, and to cause judgment and justice to run down as a mighty stream; when they have not only a great knowlege of government, and the things that belong to it in the theory, but it is, as it were, natural to them to apply the various powers and faculties with which God has endowed them, and the knowledge they have obtained by study and observation, to that business, so as to perform it most advantageously and effectually.

4. Stability and firmness of integrity, fidelity, and piety, in the exercise of authority, is another thing that greatly contributes to, and is very essential in the character of a strong rod.

When he that is in authority is not only a man of strong reason and great discerning to know what is just, but is a man of strict integrity and righteousness, is firm and immoveable in the execution of justice and judgment; and when he is not only a man of great ability to bear down vice and immorality, but has a disposition agreeable to such ability; is one that has a strong aversion to wickedness, and is disposed to use the power God has put into his hands to suppress it; and is one that not only opposes vice by his authority, but by his example; when he is one of inflexible fidelity, will be faithful to God whose minister he is, to his people for good, is immoveable in his regard to his supreme authority, his commands and

his glory; and will be faithful to his king and country; will not be induced by the many temptations that attend the business of men in public authority, basely to betray his trust; will not consent to do what he thinks not to be for the public good, for his own gain or advancement, or any private interest; is one that is well principled, and is firm in acting agreeably to his principles, and will not be prevailed with to do otherwise through fear or favor, to follow a multitude, or to maintain his interest in any on whom he depends for the honor or profit of his place, whether it be prince or people; and is also one of that strength of mind, whereby he rules his own spirit. These things do very eminently contribute to a ruler's title to the denomination of a strong rod.

5. And LASTLY, It also contributes to that strength of a man in authority by which he may be denominated a strong rod, when he is in such circumstances as give him advantage for the exercise of his strength, for the public good; as his being a person of honorable descent, of a distinguished education, his being a man of estate, one that is advanced in years, one that has long been in authority, so that it is become, as it were, natural for the people to pay him deference, to reverence him, to be influenced and governed by him, and submit to his authority; his being extensively known, and much honored and regarded abroad; his being one of a good presence, majesty of countenance, decency of behavior, becoming one in authority; of forcible speech, &c. These things add to his strength, and increase his ability and advantage to serve his generation in the place of a ruler, and therefore in some respect, serve to render him one that is the more fitly and eminently called a strong rod.

I now proceed,

II. To shew that when such strong rods are broken and withered by death, it is an awful judgment of God on the people that are deprived of them, and worthy of great lamentation.

And that on two accounts,

1. By reason of the many positive benefits and blessings to a people that such rulers are the instruments of.

Almost all the prosperity of a public society and civil community does, under God, depend on their rulers. They are like the main springs or wheels in a machine, that keep every part in its due motion, and are in the body politic, as the vitals in the body natural, and as the pillars and foundation in a building. Civil rulers are called "the foundations of the earth." Psalm lxxxii. 5, and xi. 3.

The prosperity of a people depends more on their rulers than is commonly imagined. As they have the public society under their care and power, so they have advantage to promote the public interest every way; and if they are such rulers as have been spoken of, they are some of the greatest blessings to the public. Their influence has a tendency to promote their wealth, and cause their temporal possessions and blessings to abound: And to promote virtue amongst them, and so to unite them one to another in peace and mutual benevolence, and make them happy in society, each one the instrument of his neighbor's quietness, comfort, and prosperity; and by these means to advance their reputation and honor in the world; and which is much more, to promote their spiritual and eternal happiness. Therefore, the wise man says, Eccles. x. 17. "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles."

We have a remarkable instance and evidence of the happy and great influence of such a strong rod as has been described, to promote the universal prosperity of a people, in the history of the reign of Solomon, though many of the people were uneasy under his government, and thought him too rigorous in his administration: See 1 Kings, xii. 4. "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon," 1 Kings iv 25. "And he made silver to be among them as stones for abundance," chap. x. 27. "And Judah and Israel were many, eating and drinking and making merry." The

queen of Sheba admired, and was greatly affected with the happiness of the people, under the government of such a strong rod, 1 Kings, x. 8, 9. Says she, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."

The flourishing state of the kingdom of Judah, while they had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, is taken notice of in our context; "her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches."

Such rulers are eminently the ministers of God to his people for good: They are great gifts of the Most High to a people, and blessed tokens of his favor, and vehicles of his goodness to them, and therein images of his own Son, the grand medium of all God's goodness to fallen mankind; and therefore, all of them are called, sons of the Most High. All civil rulers, if they are as they ought to be, such strong rods as have been described, will be like the Son of the Most High, vehicles of good to mankind, and like him, will be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. And therefore, when a people are bereaved of them, they sustain an unspeakable loss, and are the subjects of a judgment of God that is greatly to be lamented.

2. On account of the great calamities such rulers are a defence from. Innumerable are the grievous and fatal calamities which public societies are exposed to in this evil world, which they can have no defence from without order and authority. If a people are without government, they are like a city broken down and without walls, encompassed on every side by enemies, and become unavoidably subject to all manner of confusion and misery.

Government is necessary to defend communities from miseries from within themselves; from the prevalence of intestine discord, mutual injustice, and violence; the members of the society continually making a prey one of another, without any defence one from another. Rulers are the heads of union in public societies, that hold the parts together; without which nothing else is to be expected, than that the members of the society will be continually divided against themselves, every one acting the part of an enemy to his neighbor, every one's hand against every man, and every man's hand against him; going on in remediless and endless broils and jarring, until the society be utterly dissolved and broken in pieces, and life itself, in the neighborhood of our fellow creatures, becomes miserable and intolerable.

We may see the need of government in societies by what is visible in families, those lesser societies, of which all public societies are constituted. How miserable would these little societies be, if all were left to themselves, without any authority or superiority in one above another, or any head of union and influence among them? We may be convinced by what we see of the lamentable consequences of the want of a proper exercise of authority and maintenance of government in families that yet are not absolutely without all authority. No less need is there of government in public societies, but much more, as they are larger. A very few may possibly, without any government, act by concert, so as to concur in what shall be for the welfare of the whole; but this is not to be expected among a multitude, constituted of many thousands, of a great variety of tempers and different interests.

As government is absolutely necessary, so there is a necessity of strong rods in order to it: The business being such as requires persons so qualified; no other being sufficient for, or well capable of the government of public societies: And therefore, those public societies are miserable, that have not such strong rods for sceptres to rule, Eccles. x. 16. "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child"

As government, and strong rods for the exercise of it, are necessary to preserve public societies from dreadful and fatal calamities arising from among themselves; so no less requisite are they to defend the community from foreign enemies. As they are like the pillars of a building, so they are also like the walls and bulwarks of a city: They are under God the main strength of a people in the time of war, and the chief instruments of their preservation, safety, and rest. This is signified in a very lively manner in the words that are used by the Jewish community in her lamentations, to express the expectations she had from her princes. Lam. iv. 20. "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, under his shadow we shall live among the Heathen." In this respect also such strong rods are sons of the Most High, and images or resemblances of the Son of God, viz. as they are their saviours from their enemies; as the judges that God raised up of old in Israel are called, Nehem. ix. 27. "Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: And in the time of their trouble when they cried unto thee, thou heardst them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.

Thus both the prosperity and safety of a people under God, depends on such rulers as are *strong rods*. While they enjoy such blessings, they are wont to be like a vine planted in a fruitful soil, with her stature exalted among the thick branches, appearing in her height with the multitude of her branches; but when they have no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule, they are like a vine planted in a wilderness that is exposed to be plucked up, and cast down to the ground, to have her fruit dried up with the east wind, and to have fire coming out of her own branches to devour her fruit.

On these accounts, when a people's strong rods are broken and withered, it is an awful judgment of God on that people, and worthy of great lamentation: As when king Josiah, (who was doubtless one of the strong rods referred to in the

text) was dead, the people made great lamentation for him. 2 Chron. xxxv. 24, 25. "And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers: And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: And behold, they are written in the Lamentations."

APPLICATION.

I come now to apply these things to our own case, under the late awful frown of Divine Providence upon us, in removing by death that honorable person in public rule and authority, an inhabitant of this town, and belonging to this congregation and church, who died at Boston the last Lord's day.

He was eminently a strong rod in the forementioned respects. As to his natural abilities, strength of reason, greatness and clearness of discerning, and depth of penetration, he was one of the first rank: It may be doubted whether he has left his superior in these respects in these parts of the world. He was a man of a truly great genius, and his genius was peculiarly fitted for the understanding and managing of public affairs.

And as his natural capacity was great, so was the knowledge that he had acquired, his understanding being greatly improved by close application of mind to those things he was called to be concerned in, and by a very exact observation of them, and long experience in them. He had indeed a great insight into the nature of public societies, the mysteries of government, and the affairs of peace and war: He had a discerning that very few have of the things wherein the public weal consists, and what those things are that do expose public societies, and of the proper means to avoid the latter and

promote the former. He was quick in his discerning, in that in most cases, especially such as belonged to his proper business, he at first sight would see further than most men when they had done their best; but yet he had a wonderful faculty of improving his own thoughts by meditation, and carrying his views a greater and greater length by long and close application of mind. He had an extraordinary ability to distinguish right and wrong, in the midst of intricacies and circumstances that tended to perplex and darken the case: He was able to weigh things, as it were, in a balance, and to distinguish those things that were solid and weighty from those that had only a fair shew, without substance, which he evidently discovered in his accurate, clear, and plain way of stating and committing causes to a jury, from the bench (as by others hath been observed) he wonderfully distinguished truth from falsehood, and the most labored cases seemed always to lie clear in his mind, his ideas properly ranged....and he had a talent of communicating them to every one's understanding, beyond almost any one, and if any were misguided, it was not because truth and falsehood, right and wrong, were not well distinguished.

He was probably one of the ablest politicians that ever New England bred: He had a very uncommon insight into human nature, and a marvellous ability to penetrate into the particular tempers and dispositions of such as he had to deal with, and to discern the fittest way of treating them, so as most effectually to influence them to any good and wise purpose.

And never perhaps was there a person that had a more extensive and thorough knowledge of the state of this land, and its public affairs, and of persons that were jointly concerned with him in them: He knew this people, and their circumstances, and what their circumstances required: He discerned the diseases of this body, and what were the proper remedies, as an able and masterly physician. He had a great acquaintance with the neighboring colonies, and also the neighbor nations on this continent, with whom we are con-

cerned in our public affairs: He had a far greater knowledge than any other person in the land, of the several nations of Indians in these northern parts of America, their tempers, manners, and the proper way of treating them, and was more extensively known by them than any other person in the country: And no other person in authority in this province had such an acquaintance with the people and country of Canada, the land of our enemies, as he.

He was exceeding far from a disposition and forwardness to intermeddle with other people's business; but as to what belonged to the offices he sustained, and the important affairs that he had the care of, he had a great understanding of what belonged to them. I have often been surprised at the length of his reach, and what I have seen of his ability to foresee and determine the consequences of things, even at a great distance, and quite beyond the sight of other men. He was not wavering and unsteady in his opinion: His manner was never to pass a judgment rashly, but he was wont first thoroughly to deliberate and weigh an affair; and in this, notwithstanding his great abilities, he was glad to improve by the help of conversation and discourse with others (and often spake of the great advantage he found by it) but when, on mature consideration, he had settled his judgment, he was not easily turned from it by false colors, and plausible pretences and appearances.

And besides his knowledge of things belonging to his particular calling as a ruler, he had also a great degree of understanding in things belonging to his general calling as a Christian: He was no inconsiderable divine: He was a wise casuist, as I know by the great help I have found from time to time by his judgment and advice in cases of conscience, wherein I have consulted him: And indeed I scarce knew the divine that I ever found more able to help and enlighten the mind in such cases than he. And he had no small degree of knowledge in things pertaining to experimental religion; but was wont to discourse on such subjects, not only

with accurate doctrinal distinctions, but as one intimately and feelingly acquainted with these things.

He was not only great in speculative knowledge, but his knowledge was practical; such as tended to a wise conduct in the affairs, business, and duties of life; so as properly to have the denomination of wisdom, and so as properly and eminently to invest him with the character of a wise man. And he was not only eminently wise and prudent in his own conduct, but was one of the ablest and wisest counsellors of others in any difficult affair.

The greatness and honorableness of his disposition was answerable to the largeness of his understanding: He was naturally of a great mind: In this respect he was truly the son of nobles. He greatly abhorred things which were mean and sordid, and seemed to be incapable of a compliance with them. How far was he from trifling and impertinence in his conversation? How far from a busy, meddling disposition? How far from any sly and clandestine management to fill his pockets with what was fraudulently withheld, or violently squeezed from the laborer, soldier, or inferior officer? How far from taking advantage from his commission or authority, or any superior power he had in his hands; or the ignorance, dependence, or necessities of others, to add to his own gains with what properly belonged to them, and with what they might justly expect as a proper reward for any of their services? How far was he from secretly taking bribes offered to induce him to favor any man in his cause, or by his power or interest to promote his being advanced to any place of public trust, honor, or profit? How greatly did he abhor lying and prevaricating? And how immoveably stedfast was he to exact truth? His hatred of those things that were mean and sordid was so apparent and well known, that it was evident that men dreaded to appear in any thing of that nature in his presence.

He was a man remarkably of a public spirit, a true lover of his country, and greatly abhorred the sacrificing the public welfare to private interest.

He was very eminently endowed with a spirit of government. The God of nature seemed to have formed him for government, as though he had been made on purpose, and cast into a mould, by which he should be every way fitted for the business of a man in public authority. Such a behavior and conduct was natural to him as tended to maintain his authority, and possess others with awe and reverence, and to enforce and render effectual what he said and did in the exercise of his authority. He did not bear the sword in vain: He was truly a terror to evil doers. What I saw in him often put me in mind of that saying of the wise man, Prov. xx. 8. "The king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes." He was one that was not afraid of the faces of men; and every one knew that it was in vain to attempt to deter him from doing what, on mature consideration, he had determined he ought to do. Every thing in him was great, and becoming a man in his public station. Perhaps never was there a man that appeared in New England to whom the denomination of *a great man* did more properly belong.

But though he was one that was great among men, exalted above others in abilities and greatness of mind, and in place of rule, and feared not the faces of men, yet he feared God. He was strictly conscientious in his conduct, both in public and private. I never knew the man that seemed more stedfastly and immoveably to act by principle, and according to rules and maxims, established and settled in his mind by the dictates of his judgment and conscience: He was a man of strict justice and fidelity: Faithfulness was eminently his character: Some of his greatest opponents that have been of the contrary party to him in public affairs, yet have openly acknowledged this of him, That he was a faithful man. He was remarkably faithful in his public trusts: He would not basely betray his trust, from fear or favor: It was in vain to expect it; however men might oppose him or neglect him, and how great soever they were: Nor would he neglect the public interest, wherein committed to him, for the sake of his

own ease, but diligently and laboriously watched and labored for it night and day. And he was faithful in private affairs as well as public: He was a most faithful friend; faithful to any one that in any case asked his counsel: And his fidelity might be depended on in whatever affair he undertook for any of his neighbors.

He was a noted instance of the virtue of temperance, unalterable in it, in all places, in all companies, and in the midst of all temptations.

Though he was a man of a great spirit, yet he had a remarkable government of his spirit; and excelled in the government of his tongue. In the midst of all provocations he met with, among the multitudes he had to deal with, and the great multiplicity of perplexing affairs in which he was concerned, and all the opposition and reproaches he was at any time the subject of; yet what was there that ever proceeded out of his mouth, that his enemies could lay hold of? No profane language, no vain, rash, unseemly, and unchristian speeches. If at any time he expressed himself with great warmth and vigor, it seemed to be from principle and determination of his judgment, rather than from passion: When he expressed himself strongly, and with vehemence, those that were acquainted with him, and well observed him from time to time, might evidently see it was done in consequence of thought and judgment, weighing the circumstances and consequences of things.

The calmness and steadiness of his behavior in private, particularly in his family, appeared remarkable and exemplary to those who had most opportunity to observe it.

He was thoroughly established in those religious principles and doctrines of the first fathers of New England, usually called the *doctrines of grace*, and had a great detestation of the opposite errors of the present fashionable divinity, as very contrary to the word of God, and the experience of every true Christian. And as he was a friend to truth, so he was a friend to vital piety and the power of godliness, and ever countenanced and favored it on all occasions.

He abhorred profaneness, and was a person of a serious and decent spirit, and ever treated sacred things with reverence. He was exemplary for his decent attendance on the public worship of God. Who ever saw him irreverently and indecently lolling, and laying down his head to sleep, or gazing and staring about the meeting house in time of divine service? And as he was able (as was before observed) to discourse very understandingly of experimental religion, so to some persons with whom he was very intimate, he gave intimations sufficiently plain, while conversing of these things, that they were matters of his own experience. And some serious persons in civil authority, that have ordinarily differed from him in matters of government, yet on some occasional close conversation with him on things of religion, have manifested an high opinion of him as to real experimental piety.

As he was known to be a serious person, and an enemy to a profane or vain conversation, so he was feared on that account by great and small. When he was in the room, only his presence was sufficient to maintain decency; though many were there that were accounted gentlemen and great men, who otherwise were disposed to take a much greater freedom in their talk and behavior, than they dared to do in his presence.

He was not unmindful of death, nor insensible of his own frailty, nor did death come unexpected to him. For some years past, he has spoken much to some persons of dying, and going into the eternal world, signifying that he did not expect to continue long here.

Added to all these things that have been mentioned to render him eminently a STRONG ROD, he was attended with many circumstances which tended to give him advantage for the exerting of his strength for the public good. He was honorably descended, was a man of considerable substance, had been long in authority, was extensively known and honored abroad, was high in the esteem of the many tribes of Indians in the neighborhood of the British colonies, and so had great influence upon them above any other man in New England; God

had endowed him with a comely presence, and majesty of countenance, becoming the great qualities of his mind, and the place in which God had set him.

In the exercise of these qualities and endowments, under these advantages, he has been, as it were, a father to this part of the land, on whom the whole country had, under God, its dependence in all its public affairs, and especially since the beginning of the present war. How much the weight of all the warlike concerns of the country (which above any part of the land lies exposed to the enemy) has lain on his shoulders, and how he has been the spring of all motion, and the doer of every thing that has been done, and how wisely and faithfully he has conducted these affairs, I need not inform this congregation. You well know that he took care of the country as a father of a family of children, not neglecting men's lives, and making light of their blood; but with great diligence, vigilance and prudence, applying himself continually to the proper means of our safety and welfare. And especially has this his native town, where he has dwelt from his infancy, reaped the benefit of his happy influence: His wisdom has been, under God, very much our guide, and his authority our support and strength, and he has been a great honor to Northampton, and ornament to our church.

He continued in full capacity of usefulness while he lived; he was indeed considerably advanced in years, but his powers of mind were not sensibly abated, and his strength of body was not so impaired, but that he was able to go long journeys, in extreme heat and cold, and in a short time.

But now this "strong rod is broken and withered," and surely the judgment of God therein is very awful, and the dispensation that which may well be for a lamentation. Probably we shall be more sensible of the worth and importance of such a strong rod by the want of it. The awful voice of God in this providence, is worthy to be attended to by this whole province, and especially by the people of this county, but in a more peculiar manner by us of this town. We have now this testimony of the divine displeasure, added to all the other

dark clouds God has lately brought over us, and his awful frowns upon us. It is a dispensation, on many accounts, greatly calling for our humiliation and fear before God; an awful manifestation of his supreme, universal, and absolute dominion, calling us to adore the divine sovereignty, and tremble at the presence of this great God: And it is a lively instance of human frailty and mortality: We see how that none are out of the reach of death, that no greatness, no authority, no wisdom and sagacity, no honorableness of person or station, no degree of valuableness and importance, exempts from the stroke of death. This is therefore a loud and solemn warning to all sorts to prepare for their departure hence.

And the memory of this person who is now gone, who was made so great a blessing while he lived, should engage us to shew respect and kindness to his family. This we should do both out of respect to him and to his father, your former eminent pastor, who in his day was, in a remarkable manner, a father to this part of the land in spirituals, and especially to this town, as this his son has been in temporals.....God greatly resented it, when the children of Israel did not shew kindness to the house of Jerubbaal that has been made an instrument of so much good to them, Judges viii. 35. "Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, according to all the good which he had shewed unto Israel."

SERMON XXXIV.*

The Nature and End of Excommunication.

1 CORINTHIANS v. 11.

BUT NOW I HAVE WRITTEN UNTO YOU, NOT TO KEEP COMPANY, IF ANY MAN THAT IS CALLED A BROTHER BE A FORNICATOR, OR COVETOUS, OR AN IDOLATER, OR A RAILER, OR A DRUNKARD, OR AN EXTORTIONER, WITH SUCH AN ONE, NO NOT TO EAT.

THE church of Corinth, in primitive times, was very famous for the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, as well as for the number of its members. This church was first planted by the Apostle Paul: He was, as it were, the spiritual father of it, who had converted its members from Heathenism to Christianity; as he reminds them in these epistles; 1 Cor. iv. 15. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." We

* Preached on the occasion of the excommunication of a person, July 22, 1739.

have an account of the apostle's planting this church in the 18th chapter of Acts.

It was doubtless excellently regulated by him, when he was present to have an immediate inspection of its affairs. But in his absence many corruptions and disorders crept in among its members. Among other disorders, one of the members had been guilty of a very heinous kind of wickedness: He had committed incest in one of the grossest degrees of it, in having his father's wife; which the apostle observes was infamous even among the Heathens. And the church of Corinth had tolerated him in it, so as notwithstanding to suffer him to continue in their communion.

The chapter of which our text is a part, is wholly upon this subject. The apostle reproves the church for conniving at this wickedness, as they had done in not excommunicating the person who had been guilty of it; and directs them speedily to cast him out from among them; thus delivering him to Satan. He orders them to purge out such scandalous persons, as the Jews were wont to purge leaven out of their houses when they kept the passover.

In the text and two foregoing verses he more particularly explains their duty with respect to such vicious persons, and enjoins it on them not to keep company with such. But then shows the difference they ought to observe in their carriage towards those who were vicious among the Heathen, who had never joined with the church, and towards those of the same vicious character who had been their professed brethren; see verse 9....12. "I wrote unto you, not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat."

In the words of the text we may observe two things, viz. the duty, and the object.

I. The duty enjoined, of which two things are expressed.

1. The behavior required, negatively expressed, *not to keep company.*

2. The manner or degree, *no not to eat.*

II. The object, who is designed by two things.

1. That he appear to be vicious; a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. We are not to understand only these particular vices, but these, or any other gross sins, or whatever carries in it visible wickedness. It is evident, that the apostle here, and in the context, intends that we should exclude out of our company all those who are visibly wicked men. For in the foregoing verses he expresses his meaning by this, that we should purge out the old leaven; and, explaining what he means by leaven, he includes all visible wickedness; as in verse 8. "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

2. The other thing by which the object of this behavior or dealing is characterised, is, that he be one that is called a brother, or one that hath been a professed Christian, and a member of the church.

DOCTRINE.

Those members of the visible Christian church that are become visibly wicked, ought not to be tolerated in the church, but should be excommunicated.

In handling this subject, I shall speak,

I. Of the nature of excommunication;

II. Of the subject; and,

III. Of the ends of it.

I. I shall say something of the nature of excommunication. It is a punishment executed in the name and according to the will of Christ, whereby a person who hath heretofore enjoyed the privileges of a member of the visible church of Christ, is cast out of the church and delivered unto Satan.

It is of the nature of a punishment inflicted: It is expressly called a punishment by the apostle in 2 Cor. ii 6. Speaking of the excommunicated Corinthian, he says, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment." For though it be not designed by man for the destruction of the person who is the subject of it, but for his correction, and so is of the nature of a castigatory punishment, at least so far as it is a punishment inflicted by men; yet it is in itself a great and dreadful calamity, and the most severe punishment that Christ hath appointed in the visible church. Although in it the church is to seek only the good of the person and his recovery from sin, there appearing, upon proper trial, no reason to hope for his recovery by gentler means; yet it is at God's sovereign disposal, whether it shall issue in his humiliation and repentance, or in his dreadful and eternal destruction; as it always doth issue in the one or the other.

In the definition of excommunication now given, two things are chiefly worthy of consideration. 1. Wherein this punishment consists. 2. By whom it is inflicted.

First. I would show wherein this punishment consists; and it is observable that there is in it something privative, and something positive.

First. There is something privative in excommunication, which consists in being deprived of a benefit heretofore enjoyed. This part of the punishment is in scripture expressed by being *cast out of the church*. So this punishment in the Jewish church was called putting out of the synagogue, John xvi. 2. The word synagogue is a word of the same signification as the word church. So this punishment in the Christian church is called casting out of the church. The

Apostle John, blaming Diotrephes for inflicting this punishment without cause, says, 3 John v. 10. "He casteth them out of the church."

This privative part of the punishment is sometimes expressed by the church's withdrawing from a member, 2 Thess. iii. 6. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *withdraw* yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

The privative part of the punishment of excommunication consists in this, viz. in being cut off from the enjoyment of the privileges of God's visible people. The whole world of mankind is divided into these two sorts, those that are God's visible people, and so are within the visible church of Christ; and those that are without the visible church, and are of the visible kingdom of Satan. Now it is a great privilege to be one of the visible people of God, to be within the visible church of Christ, and to enjoy the benefits of such: It is abundantly so spoken of in scripture. On the other hand, it is very doleful to be without this visible kingdom, or to be cut off from the privileges of it, and to be excluded, as those who are to be treated as belonging to the visible kingdom of Satan.

The privileges which are to be enjoyed in the visible church of Christ, from which excommunicated persons are to be cut off, are of these four kinds:

1. The charity of the church.

2. Brotherly society with the members of the church.

3. The fellowship of the church in worship.

4. The internal privileges of visible Christians.

1. They are cut off from being the objects of that charity of God's people which is due to Christian brethren. They are not indeed cut off from all the charity of God's people, for

all men ought to be the objects of their love. There is a love due from the people of God even to the Heathens and others who are not in the visible church of Christ. Our love should be like that of our heavenly Father, who is kind to the evil and the good. But I speak of the brotherly charity due to visible saints.

Charity, as the apostle represents it, is as it were the bond by which the several members of the church of Christ are united together; and therefore he calls it the bond of perfectness; Col. iii. 14. "Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." But when a person is justly excommunicated, it is like a physician's cutting off a diseased member from the body; and then the bond which before united it to the body is cut or broken.

A scandal is the same as a stumbling block; and when a member of the visible church is guilty of scandal, a stumbling block is laid before others in two respects.

(1.) It is a dishonor to God, a bad example, and a stumbling block, as it is the occasion of others falling into sin.

(2.) It is a stumbling block in the way of the charity of his fellow Christians towards the offender. As long therefore as the scandal remains, it stumbles the charity of others: And if it finally remains after proper endeavors to remove it, then it breaks their charity, and so the offender is cut off from the charity of the church.

He is cut off from the charity of the church in the following respects:

[1.] As he is cut off from the charitable opinion and esteem of the church; so that the church cannot any longer look upon him as a Christian, and so rejects him; therefore excommunication is called a rejection, Tit. iii. 10. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." This implies that the church doth not approve, or that it disapproves the person as a Christian: It cannot any longer charitably look upon him as a saint, or fellow worshipper of God, and can do no other than, on the contrary, esteem him an enemy of God; and so doth openly withdraw

its charity from him, ceasing to acknowledge him as a fellow Christian, or fellow worshipper of God, and henceforward treating him as no more a fellow worshipper than the Heathens.

[2.] The person excommunicated is also cut off from that honor which is due to brethren and fellow Christians. To be a visible Christian is an honorable character, and much honor is due to persons of this character. But excommunicated persons forfeit this honor. Christians ought not to pay that honor and respect to them which they pay to others; but should treat them as unworthy of such honor, that they may be ashamed. Christ tells us, that they should "be unto us as Heathen men and publicans," (Matth. xviii. 17.) which implies a withdrawing from them that common respect and honor which we pay to others. There doubtless, therefore, should be a great difference between the respect that we show such, and that which we show others: We ought to treat them so as to let them plainly see that we do not count them worthy of it, and so as tends to put them to shame.

[3.] They ought to be cut off from that brotherly complacence that is due to Christian brethren. Much love and complacency is due to those who are visible Christians, or to those whom we are obliged in charity to receive as saints; and on this account, because they are visible Christians. But this complacence excommunicated persons forfeit.

The love of benevolence or of good will is indeed still due to them, as it is to the visibly wicked: We should still wish well to them, and seek their good. Excommunication itself is to be performed as an act of benevolence or good will: We should seek their good by it; and it is to be used as a mean of their eternal salvation. But complacence and delight in them as visible Christians is to be withdrawn; and on the contrary they are to be the objects of displacency and abhorrence. When they are excommunicated they are avoided and rejected with abhorrence, as visibly and apparently wicked. We are to cast them out as an unclean thing which defiles the church of God.

In this sense the Psalmist professes an hatred of those who were the visible enemies of God. Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22. "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred." Not that he hated them with an hatred of malice or ill will, but with displacency and abhorrence of their wickedness. In this respect we ought to be the children of our Father who is in heaven, who, though he loves many wicked men with a love of benevolence, yet cannot love them with a love of complacence. Thus excommunicated persons are cut off from the charity of the church.

2. They are cut off from the society which Christians have together as brethren. I speak now of the common society which Christian brethren have together. Thus we are commanded to *withdraw* from such; 2 Thess. iii. 6. To *avoid* them; Rom. xvi. 17. To *have no company* with them; 2 Thess. iii. 14. And to *treat them as Heathens and publicans;* Matth. xviii. 17. The people of God are not only to avoid society with visibly wicked men in sacred things; but when excommunicated, as much as may be to avoid and withdraw from them as to that common society which is proper to subsist among Christians.

Not that they should avoid speaking to them on any occasion. All manner and all degrees of society are not forbidden; but all unnecessary society, all such society as holds forth complacence in them, or such as is wont to be among those that delight in the company of one another. We should not associate ourselves with them so as to make them our companions. Yea there ought to be such an avoiding of their company as shall show great dislike, or such as there is wont to be between persons who very much dislike each other.

Particularly, we are forbidden such a degree of society, or appearance of associating ourselves with them, as there is in making them our guests at our tables, or in being their guests at their tables; as is manifest in the text, where we are commanded to have no company with them, *no not to eat.* That

this respects not eating with them at the Lord's Supper, but a common eating, is evident by two things.

(1.) It is evident by the words, that this eating here forbidden, is one of the lowest degrees of keeping company, which are forbidden. Keep no company with such an one, saith the apostle, *no not to eat:* As much as to say, no not in so low a degree as to eat with him. But this would be a ridiculous sort of language for eating with him at the Lord's Supper, which is the very highest degree of visible Christian communion. Who can suppose that the apostle would speak such nonsense as this, Take heed and have no company with a man, no not so much as in the highest degree of communion that you can have.

(2.) The apostle mentions this eating as a way of keeping company which they might not hold with an excommunicated brother, which however they might hold with the Heathen. He tells them, not to keep company with fornicators; then he informs them, he means not with the fornicators of this world, that is, the Heathens; but, saith he, "if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, &c. with such an one keep no company, *no not to eat.*" This makes it most apparent, that the apostle doth not mean eating at the Lord's table; for so they might not keep company with the fornicators of the Heathens any more than with an excommunicated person.

Here naturally arise two questions.

Question 1. How far are the church to treat excommunicated persons as they would treat the Heathens, or those who never have been of the visible church? I answer, they are to treat them as Heathens, excepting in these two things, in which there is a difference to be observed.

(1.) They are to have a greater concern for their welfare still than if they had never been brethren, and therefore ought to take more pains, by admonitions and otherwise, to reclaim and save them, than they are obliged to take towards those who have been always Heathens. This seems manifest by

that of the apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15. "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The consideration that he hath been a brother heretofore, and that we have not so finally cast him off from that relation, but that we are still hoping and using means for his recovery, obliges us to concern ourselves more for the good of his soul than for those with whom we never had any such connexion; and so to pray for him, and to take pains with him by admonishing him.

The very reason of the thing shows the same. For this very ordinance of excommunication is used for this end, that we may thereby obtain the good of the person excommunicated. And surely we should be more concerned for the good of those who have been our brethren, and who are now under the operation of means used by us for their good, than for those with whom we never had any special connexion. Thus there should be more of the love of benevolence exercised towards persons excommunicated, than towards those who never were members of the church.

But then,

(2.) On the other hand, as to what relates to the love of complacence, they ought to be treated with greater displacency and disrespect than the Heathen. This is plain by the text and context. For the apostle plainly doth not require of us to avoid the company of the Heathen, or the fornicators of the world, but doth expressly require us to avoid the company of any brother who shall be guilty of any of the vices pointed out in the text, or any other like vice, and therefore be excommunicated.

This is also plain by the reason of the thing. For those who have once been visible Christians and have apostatized and cast off that visibility, deserve to be treated with more abhorrence than those who have never made any pretensions to Christianity. The sin of such in apostatizing from their

profession is more aggravated than the sin of those who never made any profession. They far more dishonor religion, and are much more abhorred of God. Therefore when Christ says, Matth. xviii. 17. "Let him be unto thee as an Heathen man and a publican," it is not meant that we should treat an excommunicated brother as Christians ought to treat Heathens and publicans; for they might eat with them, as Christ himself did; and the apostle gives leave to eat with such, 1 Cor. x. 27; and in the context gives leave to keep company with such; yet forbids to eat with an excommunicated person.

Christ's meaning must be, that we should treat an excommunicated person, as the Jews were wont to treat the Heathens and publicans; and as the disciples had been always taught among the Jews, and brought up, and used to treat them. They would by no means eat with publicans and sinners; they would not eat with the Gentiles, or with the Samaritans. Therefore Peter durst not eat with the Gentiles when the Jews were present; Gal. ii. 12.

Question 2. What kindness and respect may and ought to be shown to such persons?

(1.) There are some things by which the members of the church are obliged to show kindness to them; and these things are chiefly two, to pray for them, and to admonish them.

(2.) The common duties and offices of humanity ought to be performed towards them; such as relieving them when they are sick, or under any other distress; allowing them those benefits of human society, and that help, which are needful for the support and defence of their lives and property.

(3.) The duties of natural and civil relations are still to be performed towards them. Excommunication doth not release children from the obligation of duty to their parents, nor parents from parental affection and care towards their children. Nor are husbands and wives released from the

duties proper to their relation. And so of all other less relations, whether natural, domestic, or civil.

3. They are cut off from the fellowship of the worship of the Christian church. The true notion of the visible church of Christ, is that part of mankind, which, as his people, is united in his worship, or which agrees in upholding his appointed worship. And the notion of a particular visible church of Christ, is a particular society of worshippers, or of visible saints, united for the social worship of God according to his institutions or ordinances. One great and main privilege then, which the members of such a church enjoy, is fellowship in the worship which God hath appointed in his church. But they that are excommunicated are cut off from this privilege, they have no fellowship, no communion with the people of God in any part of their worship: They can have no fellowship with them in baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or in the prayers which they offer up, or in the praises which they sing.

He that is the mouth of the worshipping congregation in offering up public prayers, is not the mouth of those who are excommunicated: He is the mouth only of the worshipping society; but they are cast out of that society. The church may and ought to pray for such; but they cannot have fellowship with such in prayer. The minister, when speaking in prayer, ought to pray for those that are shut out of the society of God's visible servants or worshippers; but he doth not speak in their name: He speaks only in the name of the united society of visible saints or worshippers. If the people of God were to put up prayers in their name, it would imply a receiving of them into charity, or that they charitably looked upon them, and received them as the servants or worshippers of God. But, as was observed before, excommunicated persons are in this respect cast out of the charity of the church, and the church hath no longer charity for them, as the servants or worshippers of God; but looks upon them as wicked men and enemies of God, and treats them as such.

So when a congregation of visible saints join in singing the praises of God, as the Psalmist says, Psalm xxxiv. 3. "Let us extol his name together;" they do it only as joining with those that are in their charity to be looked upon as fellow servants and fellow worshippers of God. They do it not as joining with Heathens; nor do the people of God say to the open enemies of God, remaining such, "Come let us extol his name together;" but they say it to their brethren in God's service. If we ought not to join with excommunicated persons in familiar society, much less ought we to hold fellowship with them in solemn worship.

4. There are privileges of a more internal nature, which those who are members of the visible church enjoy, from which excommunicated persons are cut off. They being God's covenant people, are in the way of covenant blessings; and therefore have more encouragement to come to God by prayer for any mercy they need. The visible church is the people among whom God hath set his tabernacle, and among whom he is wont to bestow his blessings. But they that are excommunicated are in a sense cast out of God's sight, or from God's face, into a land of banishment, as Cain was; Gen. iv. 14, 16. They are not in the way of those smiles of Providence, those tokens of God's favor, and that light of God's countenance, which those who are within are in the way of. Nor, as they are cast out from among God's covenant people, have they the divine covenant to plead, as the members of the church have.

Thus far I have considered the privative part of the punishment of excommunication.

I now proceed,

Secondly, To the positive part, which is expressed by being delivered to Satan, in verse 5, of the context. By which two things seem to be signified.

1. A being delivered over to the calamities to which they are subject who belong to the visible kingdom of the devil. As they who are excommunicated are thrust out from among

the visible people of God ; so doubtless they are to be looked upon, in most respects at least, as being in the miserable, deplorable circumstances in which those are who are under the visible tyranny of the devil, as the Heathens are. And in many respects they, doubtless, suffer the cruel tyranny of the devil, in a manner agreeable to the condition they are in, being cast out into his visible kingdom.

2. It is reasonable to suppose that God is wont to make the devil the instrument of those peculiar, severe chastisements which their apostacy deserves. As they deserve more severe chastisement than the Heathens, and are delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh; so we may well suppose, either that God is wont to let Satan loose, sorely to molest them outwardly or inwardly, and by such severe means to destroy the flesh, and to humble them ; or that he suffers the devil to take possession of them, dreadfully to harden them, and so to destroy them for ever. For although what men are to aim at, is only the destruction of the flesh ; yet whether it shall prove the destruction of the flesh, or the eternal and more dreadful destruction of them, is at God's sovereign disposal.....So much for the nature of excommunication.

Secondly. I come to show by whom this punishment is to be looked on as being inflicted.

1. When it is regularly and duly inflicted, it is to be looked upon as done by Christ himself. That is imported in the definition, that it is according to his will, and to the directions given in his word. And therefore he is to be looked upon as principal in it, and we ought to esteem it to be as really and truly from him, as if he were on earth, and personally inflicted it.

2. As it is inflicted by men, it is only done ministerially. They do not act of themselves in this, any more than in preaching the word. When the word is preached, it is the word of Christ which is spoken, as the speaker speaks in the name of Christ, as his ambassador. So, when a church excommunicates a member, the church acts in the name of

Christ, and by his authority, not by its own. It is governed by his will, not by its own. Indeed it is only a particular application of the word of Christ.

Therefore it is promised, that when it is duly done, it shall be confirmed in heaven; i. e. Christ will confirm it, by acknowledging it to be his own act; and he will, in his future providence, have regard to what is done thus as done by himself: He will look on the person, and treat him as cast out and delivered to Satan by himself; and if he repent not, will for ever reject and damn him: Matth. xviii. 18. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven;" John xx. 23. "Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

I shall now, as was proposed,

II. Endeavor to show who are the proper subjects of excommunication. They are those members of the church who are now become visibly wicked. Visibly wicked persons ought not to be tolerated in the church, but should be cast out, as the very name and nature of the visible church show, which is a society of visible saints, or visibly holy persons. When any of those visible saints become visibly wicked men, they ought to be cast out of the church. Now, the members of the church become visibly wicked by these two things:

1. By gross sin. Saints may be guilty of other sins, and very often are, without throwing any just stumbling block in the way of public charity, or of the charity of their Christian brethren. The common failures of humanity, and the daily short comings of the best of men, do not ordinarily stumble the charity of their brethren; but when they fall into any gross sin, this effect follows; for we naturally argue, that he who hath committed some gross sin hath doubtless much more practised less and more secret sins; and so we doubt concerning the soundness and sincerity of his heart. Therefore all those who commit any gross sin, as they stumble the charity of their brethren, are proper subjects of discipline;

and unless they confess their sin, and manifest their repentance, are proper subjects of excommunication.

This leads me to say,

2. That the members of the church do especially become visibly wicked, when they remain impenitent in their sins, after proper means used to reclaim them. Merely being guilty of gross sin, is a stumbling block to charity, unless repentance immediately succeed; but especially when the guilty person remains obstinate and contumacious; in such a case he is most clearly a visibly wicked person, and therefore to be dealt with as such; to be cast out into the wicked world, the kingdom of Satan, where he appears to belong.

Nor is contumacy in gross sins only a sufficient ground of excommunication. In the text the apostle commands us to inflict this censure, not only on those who are guilty of the gross sins of fornication, idolatry, and drunkenness, but also on those who are guilty of covetousness, railing, and extortion, which, at least in some degrees of them, are generally esteemed no very heinous crimes. And in Rom. xvi. 17, the same apostle commands the church to excommunicate "them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine they had learned;" and in 2 Thes. iii. 14, to excommunicate every one who should "not obey his word by that epistle." Now, according to these precepts, every one who doth not observe the doctrine of the apostles, and their word contained in their epistles, and so, by parity of reason, the divine instructions contained in the other parts of scripture, is to be excommunicated, provided he continue impenitent and contumacious. So that contumacy and impenitence in any real and manifest sin whatsoever, deserve excommunication.

III. I come at length to speak of the ends of this ecclesiastical censure. The special ends of it are these three.

1. That the church may be be kept pure, and the ordinances of God not be defiled. This end is mentioned in the context, verse 6, &c. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaven-

eth the whole lump ? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

When the church and the ordinances of God are defiled by the toleration of wicked men in the church, God the Father, Jesus Christ the head and founder of the church, the religion of the gospel, and the church itself, are dishonored and exposed to contempt.

That the other members themselves may not be defiled, it is necessary that they bear a testimony against sin, by censuring it whenever it appears among them, especially in the grosser acts of wickedness. If they neglect so to do, they contract guilt by the very neglect ; and not only so, but they expose themselves to learn the same vices which they tolerate in others ; for " a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Hence that earnest caution of the apostle, Heb. xii. 15. " looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God ; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many BE DEFILED."

2. That others may be deterred from wickedness. As the neglect of proper censure with respect to visibly wicked church members, tends to lead and encourage others to commit the same wickedness ; so the infliction of proper censure tends to restrain others, not only from the same wickedness, but from sin in general. This, therefore, is repeatedly mentioned as one end of the punishments appointed to be inflicted by the law of Moses : Deut. xiii. 11. " And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more such wickedness as this is among you."

3. That the persons themselves may be reclaimed, and that their souls may be saved. When other more gentle means have been used in vain, then it is the duty of the church to use this, which is more severe, in order to bring them to conviction, shame, and humiliation ; and that, by being rejected and avoided by the church, and treated with disrespect,

they may be convinced how they deserve to be forever disowned of God; that by being delivered unto Satan, they may learn how they deserve for ever to be delivered up to him; that by his being made the instrument of their chastisement, they may learn how they deserve to be tormented by him, without any rest day or night, for ever and ever.

This with the counsels and admonitions by which it is to be followed, is the last mean that the church is to use, in order to reclaim those members which are become visibly wicked. If this be ineffectual, what is next to be expected, is destruction without remedy.

APPLICATION.

I shall apply this subject in a brief use of exhortation to this church, to maintain strictly the proper discipline of the gospel in general, and particularly that part of it which consists in excommunication. To this end I shall just suggest to you the following motives.

1. That if you tolerate visible wickedness in your members, you will greatly dishonor God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the religion which you profess, the church in general, and yourselves in particular. As those members of the church that practise wickedness themselves, bring dishonor upon all these, so do those who tolerate them in it. The language of it is, that God doth not require holiness in his servants; that Christ doth not require it in his disciples; that the religion of the gospel is not an holy religion; that the church is not a body of holy servants of God; and that this church in particular, hath no regard to holiness or true virtue.

2. Your own good loudly calls you to the same thing. From what hath been already said, you see how liable you, as individuals, will be to catch the contagion, which is easily communicated by reason of the natural depravity, in a degree at least, remaining in the best of men.

Beside, if strict discipline be maintained among you, it will not only tend to prevent the spread of wickedness, but to make you more fruitful in holiness. If you know that the eyes of your brethren observe all your conduct, it will not only make you more guarded against sin, but more careful "to maintain good works," and to abound in "the fruits of the spirit." Thus you will have more abundant joy and peace in believing.

3. The good of those who are without should be another motive. What the apostle saith with reference to another subject, in 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. is perfectly applicable to the case before us: "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." If strict discipline, and thereby strict morals, were maintained in the church, it would, in all probability, be one of the most powerful means of conviction and conversion towards those who are without.

4. Benevolence towards your offending brethren themselves calls upon you to maintain discipline in all its parts. Surely, if we love our brethren, it will grieve us to see them wandering from the path of truth and duty; and in proportion as our compassion is moved, shall we be disposed to use all proper means to reclaim and bring them back to the right way. Now, the rules of discipline contained in the gospel are the most proper, and best adapted to this end, that infinite wisdom itself could devise. Even excommunication is instituted for this very end, *the destruction of the flesh*, and *the salvation of the spirit*. If, therefore, we have any love to our offending and erring brethren, it becomes us to manifest it, in executing strictly the rules of gospel discipline, and even excommunication itself, whenever it is necessary.

5. But the absolute authority of Christ ought to be sufficient in this case, if there were no other motive. Our text is only one of many passages in the scripture, wherein strict dis-

cipline is expressly commanded, and peremptorily enjoined. Now, how can you be the true disciples of Christ, if you live in the neglect of these plain positive commands? "If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments;" and, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." But, "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If you strictly follow the rules of discipline instituted by Christ, you have reason to hope for his blessing; for he is wont to bless his own institutions, and to smile upon the means of grace which he hath appointed.

SERMON XXXV.*

The Sin of Theft and of Injustice.

EXODUS xx. 15.

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

THIS you all know is one of the ten commandments which constitute a summary of man's duty, as revealed by God. God made many revelations to the children of Israel in the wilderness by Moses: But this made in the ten commandments is the chief. Most of those other revelations, which God made to that people, contained ceremonial or judicial laws; but this contains the moral law. The most of those other laws respected the Jewish nation; but here is a summary of the laws that are binding on all mankind. Those were to last till Christ should come, and have set up the Christian church; these are of perpetual obligation, and last to the end of the world. God every where, by Moses and the prophets, manifests a far greater regard to the duties of these commands, than to any of the rites of the ceremonial law.

* Dated July, 1740.

These commands were the first commands that were given forth at Mount Sinai, before any of the precepts of the ceremonial or judicial laws. They were delivered by a great voice out of the midst of fire, which made all the people in the camp tremble, and afterwards were engraven on the tables of stone, and laid up in the ark: The first table containing the four first commandments, which teach our duty to God; the second table containing the six last, which teach our duty to man. The sum of the duties of the first table is contained in that which Christ says is the first and great commandment of the law; Matth. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." The sum of what is required in the second table, is what Christ calls the second command, like unto the first; verse 39. "The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Of the commands of this second table of the law, the first, which is the fifth of the ten, refers to that respect and honor which is due to our neighbor; the second respects his life; the third his chastity; the fourth his estate; the fifth his good name; the sixth and last respects his possessions and enjoyments in general. It is that command which respects our neighbor's estate, and which is the fourth command of the second table, and the eighth of the whole decalogue, on which I am to insist at this time.

Here I shall not raise any doctrine from the words, as the subject of my discourse, but shall make the command itself, as the words of it lie before us in the decalogue, my subject. And that I may treat of this command in a manner as brief as may be, I shall not stand to show, first, what duties are required by the command, and then what sins are forbidden in it: But as the words of the commandment are in the form of a prohibition, forbidding a certain kind of sin; so I shall handle them, by considering particularly what it is that this command forbids. The sin that is forbidden in this command, is called stealing; yet we cannot reasonably understand it only

of that act, which in the more ordinary and strict sense of the word, is called stealing.

But the iniquity which this command forbids, may be summarily expressed thus:

An unjust usurping of our neighbor's property, without his consent.

So much is doubtless comprehended in the text; yet this comprehends much more than is implied in the ordinary use of the word, *stealing;* which is only a secret taking of that which is another's, from his possession, without either his consent or knowledge. But the ten commands are not to be limited to the strictest sense of the words, but are to be understood in such a latitude, as to include all things that are of that nature or kind. Hence Christ reproves the Pharisees' interpretation of the sixth command, Matth. v. 21, 22; and also their interpretation of the seventh command; see ver. 27, 28; by which it appears that the commands are not to be understood as forbidding only these individual sins, which are expressly mentioned, in the strictest sense of the expressions; but all other things of the same nature or kind.

Therefore undoubtedly what is forbidden in this command is not only that private robbing of our neighbor, which is called stealing in the strictest sense of the expression; but all unjust usurpation of our neighbor's property. Here it may be observed, that an unjust usurpation of our neighbor's property is twofold; it may be,

(1.) Either by withholding what is our neighbor's, or,

(2.) By taking it from him.

First, It consists in an unjust withholding of what is our neighbor's. There are many ways in which persons may unjustly usurp their neighbor's property, by withholding what

is his due ; but I shall particularize at this time only two things.

1. The unfaithfulness of men in not fulfilling their engagements. Ordinarily when men promise any thing to their neighbor, or enter into engagements by undertaking any business with which their neighbor entrusts them, their engagements invest their neighbor with a right to that which is engaged ; so that if they withhold it, they usurp that which belongs to their neighbor. So it is, when men break their promises, because they find them to be inconvenient, and they cannot fulfil them without difficulty and trouble ; or merely because they have altered their minds since they promised. They think they have not consulted their own interest in the promise which they have made, and that if they had considered the matter as much before they promised as they have since, they should not have promised. Therefore they take the liberty to set their own promises aside. Besides, sometimes persons violate this command, by neglecting to fulfil their engagements, through a careless, negligent spirit.

They violate this command, in withholding what belongs to their neighbor, when they are not faithful in any business which they have undertaken to do for their neighbor. If their neighbor have hired them to labor for him for a certain time, and they be not careful well to husband the time ; if they be hired to day's labor, and be not careful to improve the day, as they have reason to think that he who hired them justly expected of them ; or if they be hired to accomplish such a piece of work, and be not careful to do it well, but do it slightly, do it not as if it were for themselves, or as they would have others do for them, when they in like manner betrust them with any business of theirs ; or if they be entrusted with any particular affair, which they undertake, but use not that care, contrivance, and diligence, to manage it so as will be to the advantage of him who entrusts them, and as they would manage it, or would insist that it should be managed, if the affair were their own : In all these cases they unjustly withhold what belongs to their neighbor.

2. Another way in which men unjustly withhold what is their neighbors, is, *in neglecting to pay their debts.* Sometimes this happens, because they run so far into debt that they cannot reasonably hope to be able to pay their debts; and this they do, either through pride and affectation of living above their circumstances; or through a grasping, covetous disposition, or some other corrupt principle. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts from carelessness of spirit about it, little concerning themselves whether they are paid or not, taking no care to go to their creditor, or to send to him; and if they see him from time to time, they say nothing about their debts.

Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, because it would put them to some inconvenience. The reason why they do it not, is not because they cannot do it, but because they cannot do it so conveniently as they desire; and so they rather choose to put their creditor to inconvenience by being without what properly belongs to him, than to put themselves to inconvenience by being without what doth not belong to them, and what they have no right to detain. In any of these cases they unjustly usurp the property of their neighbor.

Sometimes persons have that by them with which they could pay their debts if they would; but they want to lay out their money for something else, to buy gay clothing for their children, or to advance their estates, or for some such end. They have other designs in hand, which must fail, if they pay their debts. When men thus withhold what is due, they unjustly usurp what is not their own. Sometimes they neglect to pay their debts, and their excuse for it is, that their creditor doth not need it; that he hath a plentiful estate, and can well bear to lie out of his money. But if the creditor be ever so rich, that gives no right to the debtor to withhold from him that which belongs to him. If it be due, it ought to be paid; for that is the very notion of its being due. It is no more lawful to withhold from a man what is his due, without his consent, because he is rich and able to do without it, than it is

lawful to steal from a man because he is rich, and able to bear the loss.

Secondly, The second way wherein men usurp their neighbor's property is, by unjustly taking it from him.

The principal ways of doing this seem to be these four, by negligence, by fraud, by violence, or by stealing, strictly so called.

1. The first way of unjustly depriving our neighbor of that which is his, is by negligence, by carelessly neglecting that which is expected by neighbors, one of another, and is necessary to prevent our neighbor's suffering in his estate by us, or by any thing that is our's; and necessary in order that neighbors may live one by another, without suffering in their lawful interests, rights and possessions, one by another.

For instance, when proper care is not taken by men to prevent their neighbor's suffering in the produce of his fields or inclosures, from their cattle, or other brute creatures; which may be either through negligence with regard to their creatures themselves, in keeping those that are unruly, and giving them their liberty, though they know that they are not fit to have their liberty, and are commonly wont to break into their neighbor's inclosures greatly to his damage; or through a neglect of that which is justly expected of them, to defend others' fields from suffering by the neighborhood of their own. In such cases men are guilty of unjustly taking from their neighbor what is his property.

It is said in the law of Moses, Exod. xxii. 5. "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his vineyard shall he make restitution." Now a man may be unjustly the cause of his neighbor's field or vineyard being eaten, either by putting in his beast, and so doing what he should not do; or by neglecting to do what he should do, to prevent his beast from getting into his field. What is said in the 144th Psalm, and two last verses, supposes that a people who carry themselves as be-

comes a people whose God is the Lord, will take thorough care that beasts do not break into their neighbor's inclosures: "That our oxen may be strong to labor; that there be *no breaking in*, nor *going out*; that there be no complaining in the streets. Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

2. Taking away that which is our neighbor's by fraud, or by deceiving him, is another mode of usurping our neighbor's property. This is the case, when men in their dealings take advantage of their neighbor's ignorance, or oversight, or mistake, to get something from him; or when they make their gains, by concealing the defects of what they sell, putting off bad for good, though this be not done by speaking falsely, but only by keeping silence; or when they take an higher price than what they sell is really worth, and more than they could get for it if the concealed defects were known; or when they sell that for good, which indeed is not merchantable, which is condemned in Amos viii. 6. "Yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat."

If a man puts off something to another with defects that are concealed, knowing that the other receives it as good, and pays such a price for it, under a notion of its having no remarkable defect but what he sees, and takes the price which the buyer under that notion offers; the seller knows that he takes a price of the buyer for that which the buyer had not of him; for the buyer is deceived, and pays for those things which he finds wanting in what he buys. It is just the same thing, as if a man should take a payment that another offers him, through a mistake, for that which he never had of him, thinking that he had it of him, when he had it not.

So a man fraudulently takes away that which is his neighbor's, when he gets his money from him by falsely commending what he hath to sell, above what he knows to be the true quality of it; and attributes those good qualities to it which he knows it has not: Or if he does not that, yet sets forth the good qualities in a degree beyond what he knows to be the true degree; or speaks of the defects and ill qualities of what

he has to sell, as if they were much less than he knows they are: Or, on the contrary, when the buyer will cry down what he is about to buy, contrary to his real opinion of the value of it....These things, however common they be in men's dealings one with another, are nothing short of iniquity, and fraud, and a great breach of this commandment, upon which we are discoursing. Prov. xx. 14. "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way then he boasteth."

Many other ways there are, whereby men blind and deceive one another in their trading, and whereby they fraudulently and unjustly take away that which is their neighbor's.

3. Another mode of unjustly invading and taking away our neighbor's property, is by violence. This violence may be done in different degrees.

(1.) Men may take away their neighbor's goods either by mere open violence, either making use of superior strength, forcibly taking away any thing that is his; or by express or implicit threatenings forcing him to yield up what he has into their hands; as is done in open robbery or piracy. Or,

(2.) By making use of some advantages which they have over their neighbor, in their dealings with him, to constrain him to yield to their gaining unreasonably of him; as when they take advantage of their neighbor's poverty to extort unreasonably from him for those things that he is under a necessity of procuring for himself or family. This is an oppression against which God hath shown a great displeasure in his word. Levit. xxv. 14. "And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbor, or buyest ought of thy neighbor, ye shall not oppress one another." Prov. xxii. 22, 23. "Rob not the poor, because he is poor, neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the souls of those that spoiled them." And Amos iv. i. 2. "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mount of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, the Lord hath

sworn in his holiness, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish hooks."

When the necessity of poor indigent people is the very thing whence others take occasion to raise the price of provisions, even above the market; this is such an oppression. There are many poor people whose families are in such necessity for bread, that they, in their extremity, will give almost any price for it, rather than go without it. Those who have to sell, though hereby they have an advantage in their hands, yet surely should not take the advantage to raise the price of provisions. We should doubtless think that we had just cause to complain, if we were in such necessity as they are, and were reduced to their straits, and were treated in this manner: And let us remember, that it is owing only to the distinguishing goodness of God to us, that we are not in their circumstances; and whatever our present circumstances are, yet we know not but that the time may still come when their case may be ours.

Men may oppress others, though they be not poor, if they will take advantage of any particular necessities of their neighbor unreasonably to extort from him. The case may be so at particular seasons, that those who are not poor, may stand in particular and extraordinary need of what we have, or what we can do for them; so that it would be greatly to their disadvantage or loss to be without it. Now to take advantage of their urgent circumstances, to get from them an unreasonable price, is a violent dealing with our neighbors.

It is very unreasonable talk to say, that such and such men are so rich, and get money so much more easily than I, that it is no hurt for me to take advantage when they are in special need, and make them give me, for work that I do for them, a great deal more than I would desire to ask of other men. Let such consider, whether, if they should by any means hereafter get forward in the world, and come to have plentiful estates, they would like that persons should act upon such principles towards them. That men are rich, gives us no more right to take away from them what is their's in this way, than it does to

steal from them, because they come easily by their property, and can do without it better than we.

Again, another thing that is a kind of violent taking from our neighbor what is his, is taking the advantage of the law to gain from others, when their cause in honesty and conscience is just and good. The circumstances of mankind, their rights, possessions, and dealings one with another, are so various, that it is impossible that any body of human laws should be contrived to suit all possible cases and circumstances. Hence the best laws may be abused and perverted to purposes contrary to the general design of laws, which is to maintain the rights and secure the properties of mankind. Human laws have a regard due to them, but always in subordination to the higher laws of God and nature. Therefore when it so happens, that we have an advantage by the law, to gain what the laws of moral honesty allow not, it is an oppression and violence to take the advantage. That human laws allow it, will not excuse us before God, the Judge of the world, who will judge us another day by his own laws, and not by the laws of the commonwealth.

4. The fourth way of unjustly taking from our neighbor that which is his, is stealing so called. All unjust ways of taking away, or invading, or usurping what is our neighbors, are called stealing in the most extensive use of the word, and all is included in the expression in this command. Yet the word stealing, as it is more commonly used, is not of so great extent, and intends not all unjust invasion of our neighbor's property, but only a particular kind of unjust taking. So that in common speech, when we speak of fraudulent dealings, of extortion, unfaithfulness in our trust, and of stealing, we understand different sins by these expressions, though they are an usurpation of what is our neighbor's.

Stealing, strictly so called, may be thus defined, *A designed taking of our neighbor's goods from him, without his consent or knowledge.* It is not merely a withholding of what is our neighbor's, but a taking away; and therein it differs from unfaithfulness in our undertakings and betrustments, and also

from negligence in the payment of debts. It is a designed or wilful depriving of our neighbor of what is his, and so differs from wronging our neighbor in his estate through carelessness or negligence. It is a taking of our neighbor's goods without his knowledge; it is a private, clandestine taking away, and so differs from robbery by open violence.

So also it differs from extortion; for in that the person knows what is taken from him. The aim of him that takes, is no other than that he should know it; for he makes use of other means than his ignorance, to obtain what is his neighbor's, viz. violence to constrain him to give it up. So also it differs from fraudulent dealing or trading. For though in fraudulent dealing, the lawful possessor doth not understand the way and means, by which he parts with his goods, and by which his neighbor becomes possessed of them; yet he knows the fact: The deceiver designedly conceals the manner only. But in stealing, strictly so called, he that takes, intends not that it shall be known that he takes. It also differs from extortion and fraudulent dealing, in that it is wholly without the consent of the owner. For in extortion, though there be no free consent; yet the consent of the owner is in some sort gained, though by violent and oppressive means. So in fraudulent dealing consent is in some sort obtained, though it be by deceit. But in stealing no kind of consent is obtained.

A person may steal from another, yet not take his goods without the knowledge of the owner; because he may know of it accidentally, he may see what is done, unawares to the thief. Therefore I have defined stealing, a designed taking without the consent or knowledge of the owner. If it be accidentally known, yet it is not known in the design and intention of the thief. The thief is so far at least private in it, that he gives no notice to the owner in the time of it. It must be also without the consent of the owner. A person may take without the knowledge of the owner, and yet not take without his consent. The owner may not know of his taking at the time, or of his taking any particular things; yet there may be his implicit consent. There may have been a general con-

sent, if not expressed, yet implied. The circumstances of the affair may be such, that his consent may well be presumed upon, either from an established custom, allowed by all, or from the nature of the case ; the thing being of such a nature, that it may well be presumed that none would refuse their consent ; as in the case of a person's accidentally passing through his neighbor's vineyard in Israel, and eating his fill of grapes ; or from the circumstances of the persons, as is the case, in many instances, of the freedom which near neighbors and intimate friends often take, and of that boldness which they use with respect to each other's goods.

In all such cases, though the owner do not particularly know what is done, yet he that takes, does it not with any contrived, designed concealment. And though there is no express, particular consent, yet there is a consent either implied, or justly presumed upon ; and he that takes, doth not designedly and advertently do it without consent.

It may happen in some cases, that one may take the goods of another, both without his knowledge and consent, either explicit or implicit, but through mistake ; yet he may not be guilty of stealing. Therefore the DESIGN of him who takes must come into consideration. When he designedly takes away that which is his neighbor's without his consent or knowledge, then he steals. So that if it should happen, that he has both his consent and knowledge, without his design, he steals. And if it so happen that he takes without either his neighbor's consent or knowledge, and yet without his own design, he steals not. I define therefore that this, which I take to be the true definition of theft or stealing, may be borne in mind, viz. A designed taking of our neighbor's goods, without his consent or knowledge ; because it is needful to clear up many things which I have yet to say on this subject.

Here I shall particularly take notice of some things, by which some persons may be ready to excuse themselves, in privately taking their neighbor's goods, which however cannot be a just excuse for it, nor will they make such a taking not to be stealing.

1. That the person whose goods are privately taken, owes or is in debt to him that takes them. Possibly some may be ready to excuse a clandestine taking of their neighbor's goods, with this plea. They may be ready to say, that they do not take that which is their neighbor's, they take that which is their own, because as much is due to them, their neighbor owes them as much, and unjustly detains it, and they know not whether ever they shall get their due of him. Their neighbor wont do them right, and therefore they must right themselves.

But such pleas as these will not justify a man in going in a private and clandestine manner to take away any thing of his neighbor's from his possession, without his consent or knowledge; but nevertheless his doing this is properly stealing. For though something of his neighbor's, which is as valuable as what he takes, may be due to him; that doth not give him such a right to his neighbor's goods, that he may take any thing that is his, according to his own pleasure, and at what time, and in what manner he pleases. That his neighbor is in debt to him, doth not give him a right to take it upon himself to be his own judge, so that he may judge for himself, which of his neighbor's goods shall be taken from him to discharge the debt; and that he may act merely acccording to his own private judgment and pleasure in such a case, without so much as acquainting his neighbor with the affair.

In order to warrant such a proceeding as this, every thing that his neighbor has, must be his. A man may not take indifferently what he pleases out of a number of goods, without the consent or knowledge of any other person, unless all is his own, to be disposed of as he pleases. Such a way of using goods according to our own pleasure, taking what we will, and at what time we will, can be warranted by nothing but a dominion over the whole. And though he who is in debt may be guilty of great injustice in detaining what is due to another; yet it doth not thence follow, but that he that takes from him, may also be guilty of great injustice towards him. The course he takes to right himself may be very irregular and

unreasonable ; and such a course, that if universally allowed and pursued in such cases, would throw human society into confusion.

When men obtain a property in any of the possessions of this life, at the same time they are also invested with a right to remain in possession of them, till they are deprived of them in some fair and regular proceeding. Every man has a right to hold his estate, and keep possession of his rights and properties, so that no other can lawfully use them as his own, until he either parts with them of his own accord, or until it be taken from him according to some established rule, in a way of open justice. Therefore he who, under pretence of having just demands upon his neighbor, privately takes his goods without his consent, takes them unjustly, and is guilty of stealing.

2. Much less will it make such a private taking not to be stealing, that he who takes, has, in way of kindness or gift, done for the person from whom he takes, as much as is equivalent to the value of what he takes. If a man do his neighbor some considerable kindness, whether in labor, or in something that he gives him, what he does or gives is supposed to be done voluntarily, and he is not to make his neighbor debtor for it ; and therefore if any thing be privately taken away, upon any such consideration, it is gross stealing.

For instance, when any person needs to have any services done for him, where a considerable number of hands are necessary ; it is common for the neighborhood to meet together and join in helping their neighbor, and frequently some provision is made for their entertainment. If any person who hath assisted on such an occasion, and is a partaker at such an entertainment, shall think within himself, The service I have done is worth a great deal more than what I shall eat and drink here, and therefore shall take liberty privately to take of the provision set before him, to carry away with him, purposely concealing the matter from him who hath entertained him, this is gross stealing ; and it is a very ridiculous plea which they make to excuse so unmanly and vile an act.

Persons in such cases may say to themselves, that the provision is made for them, and set before them; that it is a time wherein considerable liberty is given, and they think, seeing they have done so much for their host, they may take something more than they eat and drink there. But then let them be open in it; let them acquaint those with it who make the entertainment; and let it not be done in any wise, in a secret, clandestine manner, with the least design or attempt to avoid their notice: On the contrary, let care be taken to give them notice and obtain their consent.

When persons do such things in a private manner, they condemn themselves by their own act; their doing what they do secretly, shows that they are conscious themselves, that they go beyond what it is expected they should do, and do what would not be allowed, if it were known. Such an act, however light they may make of it, is abominable theft, and what any person of religion or any sense of the dignity of their own nature, would to the greatest degree abhor and detest.

3. It is not sufficient to make a private taking without consent, not to be stealing, that it is but a small matter that is taken. If the thing be of little value, yet if it be worth a purposed concealing from the owner, the value is great enough to render the taking of it proper theft. If it be pretended that the thing is of so small consequence, that it is not worth asking for; then surely it is not worth a purposed concealing from the owner, when it is taken. He who, under this pretence, conceals his taking, in the very act contradicts his own pretence; for his action shows that he apprehends, or at least suspects, that, as small a matter as it is, the owner would not like the taking of it, if he knew it; otherwise the taker would not desire to conceal it.

The owner of any goods, and not other people, is the proper judge, whether what he owns be of such a value, that it is worth his while to keep it, and to refuse his consent to the taking of it from him. He who possesses, and not he who takes away, has a right to judge of what consequence his possessions are to him. He has a right to set what value he pleas-

es on them, and to treat them according to that value. Beside, merely that a thing is of small value, cannot give a right to others, purposely and designedly to take it away, without the knowledge or consent of the owner. Because if this only gives a right, then all have a right to take things of small value; and at this rate a great number of persons, each of them taking from a man that which is of small value, might take away all he has.

Therefore, it will not justify persons, in going purposely to take such things as fruit from the trees, or gardens, or fields of their neighbors, without their knowledge or consent, that the things which they take are things of small value; nor is that sufficient to render such an act, not an act of theft, properly so called. This shows also that the smallenss of the value of what is privately taken at feasts and entertainments, doth not render the taking of such things, not stealing.

The small value of a thing may in some cases justify an occasional taking of things, so far as we may from thence, and from what is generally allowed, reasonably presume that the owner gives his consent. But if that be the case, and persons really take, as not supposing any other than that the owner consents to such occasional taking, then he that takes will not at all endeavor to do what he does secretly, nor in any measure to avoid notice. But merely the smallness of the value of a thing, can never justify a secret taking of what is another's.

APPLICATION.

I. The first use I would make of this doctrine, is to warn against all injustice and dishonesty, as to what appertains to our neighbor's temporal goods or possessions. Let me warn all to avoid all ways of unjustly invading or usurping what is their neighbor's, and let me press that exhortation of the apostle, Rom. xii. 17. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men;" which implies, that those things which we pro-

vide for ourselves, and use as our own, should be such as we come honestly by; and especially that we should avoid all clandestine or underhand ways of obtaining any thing that is our neighbor's, either by fraudulent dealing, or by that taking without our neighbor's knowledge and consent, of which we have been speaking.

I warn you to beware of dishonesty in withholding what is your neighbor's, either by unfaithfulness to your trust in any business which you undertake, or by withholding your neighbor's just and honest dues. Consider that saying of the apostle, Rom. viii. 8. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." Be also warned against wronging your neighbor or injuring him in his inclosures, or in any of his just rights and properties, through careless neglect of what is reasonably expected by neighbors one of another, in order that they may live one by another without mutual injury. Let all beware that they bring not guilt on their souls in the sight of God, by taking an advantage to oppress any person. Especially beware of taking advantage of others' poverty to extort from them: For God will defend their cause, and you will be no gainers by such oppression.

Beware also of all injustice by deceitful and fraudulent dealing. Many of you have much to do with others in a way of traffic in buying and selling. You doubtless meet with abundance of temptation to fraud, and have need to keep a strong guard upon yourselves. There are many temptations to false speaking in trading, to speaking that which is false, both about what you would buy and what you have to sell. There are, in buying, temptations to do as in Prov. xx. 14. "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer." There are many temptations to take indirect courses, to blind those with whom you deal, about the qualities of what you have to sell, to diminish the defects of your commodities, or to conceal them, and to put off things for good, which are bad. And there are doubtless many other ways that men meet with temptations to deceive others, which your own experience will better suggest to you than I can.

But here I shall take occasion to speak of a particular kind of fraud, which is very aggravated, and is rather a defrauding of God than man. What I mean is, *the giving of that which is bad for good in public contributions.* Though it be matter of great shame and lamentation, that it should be so in such a place as this; yet it is to be feared, from what has sometimes been observed, that there are some persons among us, who, when there is a public contribution to be attended for the poor, or some other pious and charitable use, do sometimes take that opportunity *to put off their bad money.* That which they find, or think, their neighbors will refuse to take at their hands, because they will have opportunity to see what is offered them, and to observe the badness of it, even *that* they therefore take opportunity to put off to God.

Hereby they save their credit; for they apprehend that they shall be concealed. They appear with others to go to the contribution, and it is not known, but that they put in that which is good. But they cheat the church of God, and defraud the expectations of the poor: Or rather they lie to God: For those who receive what is given, stand as Christ's receivers, and not as acting for themselves in this matter.

They that do thus, do that which is very much of the same nature with that sin, against which God denounces that dreadful curse in Mal. i 14. "Cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: For I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the Heathen." *That hath in his flock a male*, i. e. That has in his flock that which is good and fit to be offered to God: For it was the male of the flock principally that was appointed, in the law of Moses, to be offered in sacrifice to God. He has in his flock that which is good, but he vows and sacrifices to the Lord, "the torn, the lame, and the sick," as it is said in the foregoing verse; "ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye

brought an offering: Should I accept this of your hands? saith the Lord.

Contributions in the Christian church come in the room of sacrifices in the Jewish church: Mercy comes in the room of sacrifice. And what is offered in the way of mercy is as much offered to God, as the sacrifices of old were. For what is done to the poor is done to Christ, and he that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; Prov. xix. 17. The Jews that offered the sick and lame of the flock, knew that if they had offered it to their governor, and had attempted to put it off, as part of the tribute or public taxes due to their earthly rulers, it would not be accepted, and therefore they were willing to put it off to God, as in the 8th verse of this chapter: "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of Hosts."

So those persons who purposely put bad money into contributions, know that what they put in would not be accepted if they should offer it to pay their public taxes. Yea, they know that their *neighbors* would not accept it off their hands: And therefore they are willing to save themselves, by putting it off to God.

This practice is also very much of the nature of the sin of Annanias and Sapphira. What they offered was by way of contribution for charitable uses. The brethren sold what they had, and brought it into a common stock, and put all under the care of deacons, that the poor might every one be supplied. Annanias and Sapphira brought a part of their possessions, and put it into the common stock; and their sin was, that they put it in for more than it really was. It was but a part of what they had, and they put it in, and would have it accepted, as if it had been all. So those among us, of whom I am speaking, put off what they put into the charitable stock, for more than it is. For they put it in, under the notion that it is something of some value; they intend it

shall be so taken by the church that sees them go to the contribution, when indeed they put in nothing at all.

Ananias and Sapphira were charged with lying to God, and doing an act of fraud towards God himself, in what they did: Acts v. 4. "While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." So those who knowingly put bad money for good into a contribution for a charitable use, as much as in them lies commit an act of fraud and deceit towards God. For the deacons who receive what is contributed, receive it not in their own names, but as Christ's receivers. I hope these things may be sufficient to have said on this head, and enough to deter every one from ever daring to do such a thing for the future.

Again, another thing I would warn you against, is, stealing, properly and strictly so called; or designedly taking away any of your neighbor's goods without his consent or knowledge. And especially I would now take occasion to warn against a practice which is very common in the country, particularly among children and young people: And that is, stealing fruit from their neighbor's trees or inclosures. There is a licentious liberty taken by many children and young people, in making bold with their neighbor's fruit; and it is to be feared, that they are too much countenanced in it by their parents and many elder people.

I am sensible, that the great thing which is pleaded, and made very much the ground of this liberty which is taken, and so much tolerated, is a very abusive and unreasonable construction and application of that text of scripture in Deut. xxiii. 24. "When thou comest into thy neighbor's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill. But thou shalt not put any in thy vessel." Because this text seems to be so much mistaken and misimproved, I shall therefore endeavor particularly to state the matter of persons taking their neighbor's fruit, and to set it in a just and clear light as concerning this text.

1. I shall show what the liberty was which was given in it.

2. What the ground of that liberty was.

3. What would, and what would not, be parallel with it, among us.

1. I am to show what the liberty was which was given in this text. It was to eat their fill of grapes when they occasionally came into, or passed through, their neighbor's vineyard, and not that they should go thither on purpose to eat grapes. This is manifest by the manner of expression: "When thou comest into thy neighbor's vineyard, thou mayest eat;" i. e. when thou art come thither on some other occasion. If God had meant to give them leave to come thither on purpose, for no other end, it would not have been expressed so; but rather thus, Thou mayest come into thy neighbor's vineyard, and eat grapes thy fill.

2. I shall show what must be supposed to be the grounds of this liberty; which were these two things:

(1.) That such were the circumstances of that people, and vineyards among them were so common, that there was no danger that this liberty would be attended with ill consequence. It is manifest throughout the history of Israel, that vineyards among them were so common that the people in general had them. Every husbandman among them was a vine dresser; and a great part of the business of a husbandman among them, consisted in dressing and taking care of his vineyards. Grapes seem to have been the most common sort of fruit that they had. Besides, there was no liberty given for persons to go on purpose to a vineyard to eat the fruit of it. So that there was no danger of neighbors suffering one by another, by any such liberty.

Not only would not the owner of the vineyard suffer any thing sensible, if one or two men should act upon the liberty granted in this text; but the liberty did not tend to any

such consequence, as the flocking of a great number to eat grapes, whereby the fruit of the vineyard might be much diminished.

(2.) Such were the circumstances of the case, that the consent of the owners of vineyards in general might well be presumed upon, though no such express liberty had been given. You may remember, that in the definition of stealing, I observed, that explicit consent is not always necessary; because the case may be so circumstanced, that consent may well be presumed on. And the reason consent might well be presumed on in the case of eating grapes, of which we are now speaking, is, what was observed just now, that there could be no sensible injury, nor any danger of any ill consequences, by which a man would sensibly suffer in the benefit of his vineyard.

Hence it is the more easy to determine,

3. What would, and what would not be parallel with this eating of grapes; or what would and what would not be justified by this text, among us.

(1.) If some particular person among us had a vineyard of the same kind of grapes with those which the children of Israel had, it would not justify others in using the same liberty when occasionally passing through it. Because, if some one person among us had such a vineyard, it would be a rare thing, and the rarity and scarcity of the fruit would render it of much greater value. Besides, if one man were distinguished by such a possession, to allow of such a liberty would have a much greater tendency to ill consequences, than if they were common, as they were in the land of Canaan. There would be danger of many persons falsely pretending occasions, and making occasions, to pass through the vineyard, for the sake of their fill of such rare fruit.

(2.) It would not be a parallel case, if men in general among us had each of them a few vines. That would be a very different thing from persons in general having large vineyards, as they had in Canaan. Nor would this text, in

such a case, warrant men's eating their fill of grapes when occasionally passing by.

(8.) If all in general had vineyards, as they had in the land of Canaan, this text would not justify men in going into their neighbor's vineyard on purpose to eat the fruit. No such liberty is given in the text. If there had been such liberty, it might have been of ill consequence. For the sake of saving their own grapes, men might make a practice of going and sending their children into their neighbors' vineyards, to eat their fill from time to time.

But the liberty given in this text to the children of Israel, seems to be very parallel with the liberty taken among us, to take up an apple or two and eat, as we are occasionally passing through a neighbor's orchard; which, as our circumstances are, we may do and justly presume that we have the owner's consent. This is a liberty that we take, and find no ill consequences. It was very much so with vineyards in the land of Canaan, as it is with orchards among us. Apples in some countries are a rare fruit; and there it would by no means be warrantable for persons to take the same liberty, when occasionally passing by their neighbor's apple tree, which we warrantably take here, when going through a neighbor's orchard.

The consideration of these things will easily show the great abuse that is made of this text, when it is brought to justify such a resorting of children and others to their neighbor's fruit trees, as is sometimes, on purpose to take and eat the fruit. Indeed this practice is not only not justified by the law of Moses, but it is in itself unreasonable, and contrary to the law of nature. The consequences of it are pernicious, so that a man can have no dependence on enjoying the fruit of his labor, or the benefit of his property in those things, which possibly he may very much value. He can have no assurance but that he shall be mainly deprived of what he has, and that others will not have the principal benefit of it; and so that his end in planting and cultivating that from which he expected those fruits of the earth, which God hath given for the

use, comfort, and delight of mankind, will not be in the main frustrated.

II. The second use may be of *exhortation*. Under this use, I shall confine myself to two particulars, many other things having been already spoken to.

1. I shall hence take occasion to exhort parents to restrain their children from stealing, and particularly from being guilty of theft in stealing the fruits of their neighbor's trees or fields. Christian parents are obliged to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But how much otherwise do they bring up their children, who bring them up in theft! Which certainly those parents are guilty of, not only who directly teach them to steal, set them an example and set them about it, but also those who tolerate them in it.

Parents should take thorough and effectual care, not only to instruct their children better, and to warn them against any such thievish practices, but also thoroughly to restrain them. Children who practice stealing, make themselves vile. Stealing, by the common consent of mankind, is a very vile practice: Therefore those parents that will not take thorough care to restrain their children from such a practice, will be guilty of the same sin which God so highly resented, and awfully punished in Eli, of which we read, 1 Sam. iii. 13. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

2. I exhort those who are conscious in themselves that they have heretofore wronged their neighbor, to make restitution. This is a duty the obligation to which is exceeding plain. If a person was wronged in taking away any thing that was his, certainly he is wronged also in detaining it and keeping it away: And all the while a person, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbor, neglects to make restitution, he lives in that wrong: He not only lives impenitent of that first wrong, of which he was guilty, but he continually

wrongs his neighbor. A man who hath gotten any thing from another wrongfully, goes on to wrong him every day that he neglects to restore it, when he has opportunity to do it. The person injured did not only suffer wrong from the other when his goods were first taken from him, but he suffers new injustice from him all the while they are unjustly kept from him.

Therefore I counsel all those of you that are sensible that you have heretofore wronged your neighbor, either by fraud, or oppression, or unfaithfulness, or stealing, whether lately or formerly, though it may have been a great while ago, speedily to go and make restitution for all the wrong your neighbor has suffered at your hands. That it was done long ago, doth not quit you from obligation still to restore, as much as if it had been done yesterday. This is a duty with which you must comply; you cannot be acquitted without it. As long as you neglect it, it will be unreasonable in you to expect any forgiveness of God. For what ground can you have to think that God will pardon you, as long as you wilfully still continue in the same wrong, and wrong the same man still every day, by detaining from him that which is his? You in your prayers ask of God, that he would forgive all your sins; but your very prayers are mockery, if you still wilfully continue in those sins.

Indeed, if you go and confess your faults to your neighbor, and he will freely acquit you from making restitution, you will be acquitted from the obligation; for in so doing, your neighbor gives you what before was his. But otherwise you cannot be acquitted.

Particularly I would leave this advice with all, for their direction in their behavior on their death beds. Indeed you should not by any means put it off till you come to die; and you will run the most fearful risk in so doing. But if you will not do it now, while you are in health, I will leave it with you to remember, when you shall come to lie on your death beds. Doubtless, then, if you have the use of your reason, you will be concerned for the salvation of your poor souls. And let

this be one thing then remembered, as absolutely necessary in order to your salvation, that before you die, you must make restitution for whatever wrong you shall have done any of your neighbors; or at least leave orders that such restitution be made; otherwise you will, as it were, go out of the world, and go before your Great Judge, with stolen goods in your hands. And certainly it will not be very comfortable or safe, to bring them into his infinitely holy and dreadful presence, when he sits on his throne of judgment, with his eyes as a flame of fire, being more pure than to look on iniquity; when he is about to sentence you to your everlasting unalterable state.

Every one here present, who has been guilty of wronging his neighbor, and has not yet made restitution, must die. Let all such therefore remember this counsel now given them, on the day when death shall approach, if they shall be so foolish as to neglect it till that time.

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